

## Organise the militant minority

# HIT BACK WITH THE MINERS

Jack Conrad

WILL THOSE WHO overwhelmingly voted to give "total support" for the miners at the TUC turn their militant rhetoric into militant action? If they don't what should we do? These questions are on the lips of all striking miners and for that matter all class conscious workers.

Of course it's not a matter of passively sitting back and waiting for Ron Todd, Jimmy Knapp and Rodney Bickerstaffe to deliver the goods, let alone David Basnett and certainly not the likes of Bill Sirs or Eric Hammond. For all these trade union leaders, left and right, seem to simply want the miners' strike finished and show absolutely no determination to see it to resounding victory. Because of this they must be forced to carry out the spirit of the resolution passed on the miners, the fact that it is 'voluntary' necessitates organised militant pressure to ensure that they do and militant action independent of the leadership if they don't. After all what the TUC passed doesn't go beyond the most basic principles of trade unionism and here lies the rub; for even if we force its implementation it does not go far enough if the miners are to see total victory.

For the miners have ranged against them not only the NCB but the state itself. A state which has not hesitated to unleash steel helmeted, baton swinging riot police, as well as the sophisticated mind-twisting media, and the scab loving law courts which are now being urged to impose life sentences on militant miners. Except for the dockers the miners have had to fight alone in a battle that the Tories in particular and the ruling class in general see as of major strategic importance.

What all this means is that the miners' strike is far more than a run of the mill trade dispute which requires traditional trade union solidarity to see it to victory. Because of this what is required to win is more than the traditional solidarity that the TUC resolution offers. What is needed is nothing less than the mobilisation of the power of the workers as a class against the power of the state; that is a strike wave of general strike proportions.

There are many honest militants who while seeing the need for such action reckon it cannot be delivered. First, they say today only a minority of workers would support one, and second the TUC under present circumstances is hardly likely to call one. Both these points are true, but should we allow them to stop us giving full support to the miners? We say no!

After specially commissioning a MORI opinion poll the *Sunday Times* revealed that 75 percent of all trade unionists were not prepared to take industrial action in support of the miners. While this piece of information was designed to dampen down support for the miners at the TUC what is

revealed for those who are not trapped into thinking in purely arithmetical terms is that there is a mighty, nay irresistible, mass of workers who are prepared to strike back with the miners. This 25 percent — that's around two and a half million workers — are the militant minority, they are the opinion makers, the thinkers, the shop stewards, the leaders. Organised they can carry with them the less advanced majority and deliver a blow with or without the TUC of such force that not only will the miners sweep to victory but Thatcher will be brought down and the rotten system that she represents will be shaken to its foundations.

The conditions are ripe for organising the militant minority. Millions of workers have suffered under the boot of the Tory government, they yearn for revenge. A glimpse of their potential power can be gained from the magnificent fighting spirit displayed by the miners.

So what is needed is a powerful enough call to bring together the

militant minority. We have argued that the NUM itself has the prestige, the organisation, to do this. A call from the NUM to establish a National Miner's Support Movement would act like a magnet to all militants. Such a body would have every possibility of quickly evolving into a permanent organisation which would immeasurably strengthen the power of the working class against the bosses and their state.

Unfortunately while being ideally placed to rally the militant minority the NUM leadership in the shape of Arthur Scargill, Peter Heathfield and Mick McGahey, has shown itself to still be imbued with loyalty to the official structure. As a result it was all too willing to enter into behind closed doors deals with Lionel Murray rather than appeal over the heads of the trade union bureaucracy directly to the rank and file at the TUC. What this shows is that in the words of Jim Larkin, we must "never trust leaders", that we must only support them in as much as they fight for the interests of the

working class as a whole.

So despite the respect Arthur Scargill has from militants, despite the fact that he appears so outstanding when compared with the gutless fat cats who pass for workers' leaders, his self-confessed commitment to reformism as enshrined in the 'Plan for Coal', his Labourism (albeit with a syndicalistic flavour), demands that militants organise independently of the leadership even in the NUM. This has already happened in areas where the leadership itself has scabbed and in the split area of Notts. Now it needs to happen nationally. This was the case in the 1920s when a militant minority organised in the MFGB (the forerunner of the NUM) even though its leader A J Cook, like Arthur Scargill, was put into leadership on a militant wave, also championed left wing causes and was regarded by the bourgeoisie as the devil incarnate.

Now is the time to build rank and file organisations in all industries, establish the links, hit back with the miners.







## Ireland and the Miners

THE METHODS USED to attack the nationalist population in the Six Counties have come home to roost. As Arthur Scargill said, "the Northern Ireland situation has been brought to the picket lines". The fact that the miners have had to face police equipped not only with truncheon but steel helmet, riot shield, and body armour, backed up by cavalry charges and snatch squads, the death of two miners, the arrest of around 7,000 others, the turning of Notts into a virtual police state, and the propaganda campaign to paint militant picketing, sabotage, and intimidation of scabs as acts of common criminals all attests to this and provides living proof of Marx's famous dictum that "No nation can be free if it oppresses other nations".

The leaders of the Labour Party, the bosses' party of the working class, were responsible for the intervention of British troops in 1969; it was they who introduced the notorious Prevention of Terrorism Act and the policy of criminalisation. Indeed, they carried out a consistent imperialist line when in government, and when in opposition things have been little different. Unfortunately the mass of workers, even many militants, have followed the Labour Party, have identified with imperialism. This has cost us dear as the miners' strike is showing. By not fighting oppression in Ireland we give weapons to the ruling class to be used against us: inevitably the methods used against the Irish are turned on us.

Ireland must become a central question in the workers' movement. We must make the cause of Irish national liberation our own; this as Marx said is the key to our own social liberation.

It is this theme that runs through our three supplements on Ireland — the first of which appears in this edition. To mark the real beginning of our work on Ireland we will now be sending copies of *The Leninist* to all Irish republican prisoners in British gaols — donations towards the cost of this will be gratefully received. Victory to the Miners. Victory to the Irish people.

The Editor.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

'The Leninist' BCM Box 928,  
London WC1N 3XX

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## LETTERS

## Party Crisis

Although I agree with you on most of your arguments, re the situation which has arisen between the EC and the PPPS and the "liquidationists", how do you propose defeating the other factions, especially the Euros, who seem to hold sway?

My branch consists mainly of retired people: members of long standing. They were quite confused when I reported back from the AGM of the PPPS, from where I had first seen *The Leninist*. Relying only on the District Office and the *Morning Star*, *Focus*, and *Marxism Today*, for information I do not think they had any idea of what Eurocommunism means.

Questions: — How can you have democratic centralism with four factions? The credibility of the Party must now be in question.

Are you in favour of "the dictatorship of the proletariat"?

You spurn the pro-Sovietism of the NCP, Eurocommunism, and the *Morning Star* seem mostly anti-Soviet, so what exactly is your position?

How can the CPGB so divided remain the Marxist-Leninist vanguard of the working class?

If nothing is done soon to resolve these disastrous splits we shall have a paper without a Party and a Euro party without a paper.

*The Leninist* is the best paper I have read for years (since the *Labour Monthly* I think). But I am most apprehensive of the present dilution of effort against capitalism and for socialism.

Your fraternally  
Duncan Smith  
Birmingham

## Paul Fleming replies

In answer to our comrade let us state that factions and democratic centralism are not necessarily contradictory. The Bolsheviks had factions until they were banned as an emergency measure at their 10th Congress. Lenin fought for all shades and factions to be represented on leading bodies of the Party including the Central Committee. Even our own CPGB had factions in the early 1920s. The difference between then and today was that all tendencies in the Party were united around a revolutionary perspective; this is of course not the case with the Euros, the Chater/Costello grouping, or the Straight Leftists — only that around *The Leninist* is revolutionary. Because of that we are 100% in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat, only by establishing the rule of the working class can we have socialism and build communism. The bourgeois military/bureaucratic state cannot be used to establish socialism, it must in fact be smashed and replaced by organs of the working class dictatorship.

This brings us to how we will defeat the opportunists. We are conducting a Leninist open ideological and political struggle. We seek to recruit the best elements of the working

class to the Communist Party on a Leninist platform. By bringing into the ranks of the Party thousands of class conscious workers we can establish a revolutionary wing of the Party as the Bolsheviks constituted themselves as a wing of the RSDLP.

## Ireland

Could I bring to the attention of fellow Party members our leadership's attitude to two Irish demonstrations?

On August 5 Sinn Fein organised a demonstration in Sheffield on Irish political prisoners in Britain. The Party did not support it, or the *Morning Star* cover it.

On August 18 a large demonstration (of 4,000) calling for Britain to leave Ireland took place in London. The '18th August Demonstration Committee' wrote to the Party months beforehand asking for support. The Party leadership chose to attach no importance to the event: the Executive Committee failed even to discuss the matter. In London a number of branches and the District Party Irish Advisory called on the Party to support it. On two occasions the District Committee of the Party in London could have discussed it but failed to do so. The District's Irish Advisory still doesn't know whether or not we supported it, having had no reply. Party members including the London Irish Advisory were also told that our 'expert' Chris Myant was to decide if we should support it!

Rumours were circulated that the organisers of the demonstration were 'ultra-leftist'. Some of the groups and individuals supporting it included the Connolly Association, the Young Liberals, Malcolm Pitt of Kent NUM (who addressed the rally at the end), Tony Benn MP, Desmond Greaves, and Father Desmond Wilson.

The Party's national bulletin, *Ireland*, made no mention of the demonstration, although it carried an article by the Labour Committee on Ireland, one of the demonstration's main organisers. The YCL did send its National Organiser, who was unable to find anyone else to carry the other end of its banner. Some Party members did attend, but as individuals.

We were told at the last Party Congress that Ireland was to be a major issue. In practice this means being to the right of the Young Liberals.

T Murphy  
Cricklewood  
North London

## Polish Coal?

The article by John Mann 'Straight Left's' Phoney Pro-Partyism in the September issue makes a number of mistakes typical of many writings of Western communists.

The basis of all information is *divide and rule*. In reporting news about Eastern Europe this technique is applied consistently. The first and clearest example is the "USSR vs Romania on the Olympics" myth. From the word go all the socialist countries made their own minds up about the LA

Olympics (this was clearly stated by Gramscian the Soviet National Olympic Committee spokesman). The Romanian decision led to no splits and no confusion in the socialist camp. The recent Liberation Day festivity with full Warsaw Treaty and Soviet presence and participation in Bucharest illustrates this.

Well the next point is much nearer to home and facts around it are more opaque. The shipment of coal into the Clyde, is it from Poland? I have understood that such shipments were blocked in 1981 and have not been resumed. Therefore it could well be that this 'Polish Coal' is another piece of news management. Has anyone the means to find out?

Despite this the gist of John Mann's article was correct, here's £2 for your fund.

Harry Sykes  
Lancs

## RCG Again

I was saddened to read the feeble insults made against the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) by John Mills in a letter printed by your paper.

To my certain knowledge, as one who attended their April day school to launch the manifesto *The Revolutionary Road to Communism in Britain*, there were over 200 people present not "under 100" as your correspondent states.

As regards their "ten year history of decline and disintegration" this is patently absurd. Of all the left organisations in Britain the RCG and their paper *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has shown a vital ability to learn from the unfolding struggles in Britain, and to apply the lessons of Marx, Lenin and the global struggle for socialism.

Furthermore, I recall from their day school that they displayed an exemplary fraternal attitude towards your own comrades: pleased to give them a hearing and engage in open debate over issues facing the working class and the movement today.

Fraternally  
Peter Rhodes  
South London

## Contempt

I read 'Gary Newman's' letter with some contempt (*The Leninist* No 11 August). He quotes Dimitrov to the effect that Fascism can be defined as: "an open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary circles of finance capital." Mr Newman says this is "completely accurate."

If this be truly the case, how can he attempt to justify the rotten betrayal of the world communist movement by Stalin and his brutal henchmen in the Russian Communist Party? Is it not the case that these rotten class collaborators signed a non-aggression pact with the "open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary circles of finance capital"? Do communists shake hands with fascist beasts? Cruel and murderous class enemies like the Nazis showed themselves to be? Gary Newman evidently thinks they do. He is ready to forgive and forget all the bitter betrayals of the communist



## Interview

# Jack Collins on the TUC, Solidarity, and Solidarnosc

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW with comrade Jack Collins, a prominent Communist Party member and secretary of the militant Kent Area NUM, took place during a Kent miners' Gala. His comments on the dockers' strike refer to the second dockers' strike which collapsed soon after. We believe that Comrade Collins' views on the question of Polish coal are particularly interesting and should be read carefully by all those in the Party who have accused *The Leninist* of being "Trotskyite" because of our sharp criticisms of the policy of scabbing adopted by the Polish party....

movement by the leaders of Russia. The way they handed communists and socialists into the hands of the Gestapo, even scouring their own concentration camps to get hold of them. He will conveniently forget the murders of millions of men, women and even little children in the name of communism, so that it is now a stench in the nostrils of every decent person in the industrialised West, especially the workers. Well, I will not.

It is the total refusal of the Gary Newmans of the communist movement to consider these facts that has befouled the honourable name of communist.

I say that the communist movement can make no progress in this or any other Western country until the history of the movement has been honestly analysed, and the dreadful deeds committed in the name of communism have been fully exposed for the whole working class to see. The refusal of so called communists to do this thing shows them up for what they are, mere hypocrites, who are ready to whitewash Russia's leaders in the hope that they will become the persons who benefit in the way of cash aid to publish more lies and whitewashing of rotten criminals.

I am, sir,  
**Harry Mullin**

(an authentic left-winger)

## Jack Conrad replies

Harry Mullin despite his claim to be "an authentic left-winger" never once even mentions the fact that the Soviet Union today represents the greatest gain, the most precious possession of the world's working class. Yes Stalin and his regime committed terrible crimes but this in no way should lead us to neglect our duty to unconditionally defend the Soviet Union. Mullin declares that "workers look on the communist with horror" this is nonsense. Of course the bourgeois media fosters hatred of communism amongst workers but the most advanced sections of the class not only look upon communists with respect but themselves often join the Communist Party, just look at the miners' strike to see the truth of this. Whatever differences and criticisms we have of Malcolm Pitt, Mick McGahey, and other leading communists in the NUM the fact is that thousands of miners elected them and look to them for leadership. This is in Britain a country with an unprecedented history of imperialism where the revolutionary tradition is very weak, so what about other Western countries? In France, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, millions of workers vote communist and their communist parties are mass organisations. In attacking the crimes of Soviet communists Mullin not only slips into anti-Sovietism but also anti-communism.

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

**The Leninist:** In our previous issue (No 12), Paul Whetton, the Secretary of Notts Striking Miners, told us that in his opinion the way to win the strike now was the question of a general strike. What is your opinion of that perspective?

**Jack Collins:** I don't think it is the only way to win the strike, but certainly we are looking forward to the maximum amount of support in order that the miners can bring this strike to a successful conclusion. But you see, this society now is being examined by the people. I believe that the ruling class are aware that the working class are strong enough to change society and I think that that is a matter that is now on the agenda.

**The Leninist:** Many militants argue against going to the TUC for a general strike for they fear a sell-out of the miners' struggle by the General Council. How would you see the possibility of guarding against this danger?

**Jack Collins:** There's no question that if we rely on the Basnetts and the Chapples and these people then we will be sold out. But what I believed about the lead up to the TUC is that many people tended to give the impression in the lead up to the TUC that the TUC would solve all our problems, knowing full well that the TUC would not deliver. They then thought there would be a certain amount of demoralisation after that and when that demoralisation took place they then thought they could move in and destroy the miners. And so it's important we go to the TUC, it's important we expose those who would sell the working class out, and it's important then that we appeal to the rank and file of the workers and we organise as best we can in order to get the workers on strike. But I don't personally think it will come from the Basnetts and the Chapples and people like that.

**The Leninist:** Isn't rank and file involvement the key element in guarding against the danger of a sell-out?

**Jack Collins:** No, the working class by and large are not deeply involved in the political situation and they have not been assessing the situation. But we have got many leaders in the movement who are prepared to lead the working class forward and develop the struggle. Many miners today have learned the political lessons. I think that in the coming days, when the dockers begin picketing those scab ports and they have had a bit of the truncheon and the police horses and the dogs they will line up with the miners as well. So I think that if it's handled correctly then the working class will go forward. The ruling class are in a terrible dilemma. What do they do to contain the workers? That's the dilemma they have got. Likewise the dilemma they have got in our industry — what do they do with the young men who don't want to go back to work unless we win? All these young men



Jack Collins, Secretary Kent NUM speaking at a Kent NUM rally

here today, ask any of them, they will all tell you I bet that they are not going back unless we have complete victory. That is the dilemma the government has got.

Likewise the dilemma they have got on the national scene is what do they do with the workers when they have started sending the police and horses after them? They'll create more enemies.

**The Leninist:** What are your feelings as the leader of striking miners about the actions of the Polish government in continuing to allow exports of coal to Britain during the miners' struggle and do you feel that the actions of the Polish authorities may have improved the image of Solidarnosc in the eyes of many NUM militants?

**Jack Collins:** I think that it's the internationalist duty of the Polish people to stop any coal coming into Britain. That cannot be questioned. I do not accept the reasoning that says that 'we've got contracts that must be honoured' — I do not accept that reasoning. That's the same sort of reasoning that people use when they are trading with Chile and places like that. We demand that the Polish working class, the Polish working class government stands with the British

miners and not allow scab coal to come in. Because that's what it is, it is scab coal. Incidentally, it's the only socialist land that is allowing oil or coal to come into this country....

I have never supported the Solidarity movement in Poland, because I realise when Reagan, Thatcher, the Pope, Frank Chapple and all that gang line up with them, I know they are my enemies as well. Solidarity is finished, that belongs to the past, that is gone. That is a counterrevolution which never succeeded.

**The Leninist:** Do you feel that mass picketting is still an adequate tactic given the far more organised and almost paramilitary response of the police?

**Jack Collins:** Yes, I believe it's important for the working class to get together in struggle everywhere. It is important to meet today like this and it is important to meet in struggle, it is important to meet on the picket line and in fact I would appeal to more and more workers, miners and non-miners, come on the picket lines....

If we got enough we could swamp the police, there is no doubt about that, we could swamp them.

Messages of solidarity or donations to the struggle should be sent to Kent NUM, Waterside House, Cherry Tree Avenue, Dover CT16 2NJ.



## POLISH COAL

# Why Does Jaruzelski Scab?

William Hughes

AT A MEETING held to celebrate International Miners' Day in Lens, northern France at the beginning of last month, leaders of the Polish miners' union pledged that they would return to Poland and fight for an end to the export of coal to Britain during the miners' strike. The Leninists of the Communist Party of Great Britain welcome this development even though, quite frankly, it is long overdue. The export of Polish coal to Britain while the miners are slugging it out with the Tories was a *crime* against internationalism and *The Leninist* has repeatedly made calls from these pages for Polish communists to end this dirty trade. The statements of the Polish miners' trade union that they plan to return to Poland and push for the ending of this trade is very welcome, if it is more than a throwaway gesture on the part of some Polish trade union functionary, if it represents a shift of the position of the Polish United Workers' Party itself. Something in all frankness we must doubt if reports in the *Financial Times* of September 24 are to be believed. Apparently the Polish authorities far from stopping the export of coal to Britain have pushed up their deliveries far in excess of the limits agreed with Arthur Scargill soon after the miners' strike began in March.

Despite our profound criticisms of the Polish party's position, we have never suggested of course that our Polish comrades' actions were motivated by anything other than a genuine desire to defend and consolidate socialism in Poland against black counterrevolution. What we have argued however is that the actions of the Polish communists revealed the tragic dilemma of centrists everywhere in that they characteristically sought short term, economic remedies to what are essentially political problems. Although these difficulties may manifest themselves in the sphere of the Polish economy their roots actually lie in the critical ideological crisis that grips the vanguard of the Polish working class — the Polish United Workers' Party.

Leading Polish economists estimated in August 1983 that it would take until 1986 to restore production to the levels of 1978 or 1979, themselves years of widespread shortages. However, recent setbacks in the export markets for Polish goods must have ruined even this cautious forecast. In the first half of this year, sales of Polish plant and equipment abroad fell to around 20 per cent of hard currency earnings for that period, which was only 32 per cent of the export target set by the government. This is very bad news indeed for Poland. Last year alone engineering goods made up one quarter of the \$5.6bn earned in hard currency.

Similarly, output in the key Polish industrial sector of shipbuilding is down from the 1970's. In one of the country's three major shipbuilding works for example, the Warski yard in Szczecin in north-west Poland, 30 per cent of machinery is standing idle. This enforced idleness is partly the result of a skilled labour shortage and partly because of weak Western demand for the type of ships that Poland specialises in. Although for the moment the order books are full, this is accounted for mostly by orders from the Soviet Union. The last time the Warski yard for example signed an order with a Western customer was in 1982. Hard currency sales of other Polish industrial specialities such as sulphuric acid plants, cement plants and sugar mills have also been severely curtailed as 'Third World' countries, previously their main market, have slashed their imports under the impact of the world recession.

Poland has therefore had to shift its export emphasis away from these 'solid' sources of hard currency towards less stable and rich ones such as energy and raw materials. The *Financial Times* of August 13, 1984, noted:

"Poland is being forced to rely more than ever for its export earnings on sales abroad of coal, sulphur, copper, silver and lead although prices are weak and the hard currency returns do not match the increased sales. Plummeting orders from developing countries have caused the bottom nearly to fall out of Poland's hard currency sales of engineering products."

Thus while in 1983 total exports of Polish coal to Western capitalist states was just 17.6 million tonnes, the first six months alone of this year saw some 13.8 million tonnes of Polish coal going West. The British miners' strike must therefore have seemed to our Polish comrades too good a chance to miss and as we have reported (see *The Leninist*, no.11), the Polish authorities shamefully responded by not only doubling the export of coal to Britain since the beginning of the year, but also by sending trade representatives to Britain in order to consolidate a more long term 'foot in the door' of the ravaged British coal industry.

In our previous issue Ernie Trory of the New Communist Party attempted to defend these actions of our Polish comrades. The substance of his defence seemed to be his inane observation that "governments deal with governments" and thus it was totally incorrect of us he claimed to call on our Polish comrades to fight for support for the British miners. Instead, according to Trory, we should have called on the Polish trade unions to organise solidarity. Although this comrade's arguments have doubtless been seized on by centrists everywhere in order to get the Polish "government" off the hook, Trory, with his knowledge of the socialist countries must know as well as we do how empty and meaningless his arguments are.

The first point to note is the position of the party inside the Polish unions. It is hardly one amongst a number of competing political groups. Similarly, what relationship exists between the party and the "government" in Poland? Trory knows as well as us that any distinctions which can be made are, in a real sense, purely formal. That is precisely why at the end of our last article on Polish coal we suggested that comrades protest to the Polish party and call on it to fulfill its vanguard, internationalist duty. We demanded that the party in Poland used its strategic position both in the new Polish trade unions and in the state apparatus to fight for international class solidarity.

Did Trory and his ilk *really* object to our call for communists in Poland to lead Polish trade unionists into solidarity actions with miners in Britain? He actually gasped in horror that we suggested that our comrades in Poland get the Polish "government" to break the international contracts signed with capitalist states that were being used to sabotage the miners' strike. He thus graphically illustrated the conservative nature of all centrist currents both in the Communist Party and those once in it like Trory. In their blockheaded attempts to defend Polish socialism, they in fact commit crimes against and endanger the very system they are trying to protect. For if these people really insist that the Polish "government" should act just like any other "government" then it will be Trory and the people who think like him who will bear the awesome responsibility for when the Polish

"government" comes to be seen by militant striking miners as no different, and certainly no better, than strike-breaking capitalist government anywhere in the world.

Some of the more idiotic sects on the fringe of the British revolutionary movement have accused *The Leninist* of aping the type of condemnations of the Polish party that have filled the pages of the Trotskyite press. Such claims in fact tell us for more about the people who make them than about *The Leninist*. And so for the benefit of those who uphold their brain death as evidence of their 'pro-Sovietism', we will point out a few important differences. We presented our criticisms of the Polish party in the spirit of the world movement to which we belong. We criticised our fellow communists not as a trend outside and opposed to the international workers' movement but as an integral part of it.

The same obviously cannot be said of the Trotskyites. Their denunciations of the Polish party were not intended to strengthen and aid communists in Poland, but on the contrary, to give succour to the scab, yellow 'union' Solidarnosc. Of course, they have had a problem in this. Scargill was brave enough to stand up against the 'united front' that the Trotskyites formed with the bourgeoisie in order to cheer on counterrevolution in Poland when he correctly branded Solidarnosc as "anti-socialist".

Over the recent period however, the Trot press has been buzzing with the news that the Solidarnosc underground has passed resolutions in 'support' of the British miners. For example, the particularly unpleasant Trot organisation *Socialist Organiser*, a group which openly confesses that it finds 'free' capitalist countries preferable to the 'totalitarian' east, gleefully contrasted Solidarnosc's supposed stand in favour of the miners to the strike-breaking of the Polish government. The voice of Solidarnosc they claimed was the voice of "condemnation of the Polish government for helping Thatcher." They went on to quote from a Solidarnosc resolution:

"The slave labour of the Polish miner serves to break the resistance of the British miner. British miner!... in the prevailing conditions of terror, the Polish workers' movement is at present not in the position to undertake protest actions. But you may be certain ... that we are in solidarity with you." (From a resolution by Underground Solidarnosc in Mazowsze region. Quoted in *Socialist Organiser*, no.191, August 9, 1984)

This resolution apparently came from an interfactory network of the Mazowsze region which includes Warsaw and surrounding towns. But just how much credence should we give to this resolution or others like it? It is not entirely unexpected that Solidarnosc supporters in Poland would assure their audience that they approve of the miners' strike. After all, it would hardly be good public relations to say they were against it. Also, in reality it is now simply Trotskyite wishful thinking to imply that Solidarnosc is still alive as a secular organisation with roots in the Polish working class. In actual fact, Solidarnosc now exists for the most part either as small grouplets of pro-imperialist intellectuals or is organised in the orbit of the Catholic church. Thus there is quite a neat division of labour inside the Polish church — its upper echelons emphasise 'dialogue' and 'compromise' with the government, while beneath its protective cassock, the militant anti-communist priests work away to undermine socialism from within:

"...at the same time as the Church continues its dialogue with the government, tacit understanding exists between church leaders and the militant priests that the essential ideas of Solidarity are to survive under Church protection even after the organisation has been eradicated." (*Financial Times*, August 26, 1983)

A good example of the "essential ideas" of Solidarnosc are preached for instance by Father Jerzy Popieluszko of Warsaw. At an August 13, 1983, memorial mass in Gdansk to celebrate the start of the 1980 strike in the Lenin shipyard, Father Popieluszko spoke to an overflowing church:

"Maria (ie the Virgin Mary) was there to help us battle the Bolshevik tide in 1920... Maria, you are with us in war and peace. Pray for us, for those in jail. Give the people a victory" (Quoted in *Ibid*).

This charming little invocation of reaction in the forms of mysticism and the semi-fascist Pilsudski is the real "voice" of Solidarnosc and fully vindicates Scargill's "anti-socialist" definition.

So does this ugly, scab organisation *really* 'support' the British miners? Hardly. While the 'underground' in Poland predictably passes 'lefty' solidarity messages for the consumption of Western Trotskyites, Solidarnosc's real position on the strike was given by an altogether more authoritative figure, one Mr Lech Walesa. Interviewed in the *Sunday Mirror* of July 29, Walesa had nothing but praise for the government's handling of the strike:

"With such a wise and brave women (ie Thatcher), Britain will find a solution to the strike."

True — the "wise and brave woman" plans to 'solve' the strike by smashing it. The opposite perspective, that of a workers' victory, seems to worry Mr Walesa:

"I disagree with any violence. The workers should demand the maximum but not at the risk of bankrupting the employer."

Walesa's concern for the solvency of British capitalism is touching — though it is a pity he did not show as much concern for the state of Polish socialism.

So, we have a suggestion for our Trotskyite friends. Instead of trying to squeeze blood from a stone as far as Solidarnosc and the miners are concerned, why not start to feature the *real* messages and actions of solidarity such as those from the Soviet unions and other genuine workers' organisations around the world?

Will Trory and his co-thinkers now sycophantically 'welcome' the call from the Polish miners union that they will fight to black coal exports to Britain? Our various centrist opponents have argued that *The Leninist* was somehow undermining socialism in Poland by our criticism. In reply, we refer them to the remarks of that well-known 'anti-Soviet', Lenin:

"There is one, and only one kind of internationalism and that is working whole-heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in *one's own country*, and supporting... *this struggle*, this and *only this* line in *every country* without exception." (Lenin, *CW*, Vol.24 p74)

Where that line is unforthcoming, it is our duty to criticise, not only for the advancement of workers' struggles in this country, but precisely to consolidate the material conquests that our class has made internationally. Our criticism is, at the end of the day, the best possible defence of Polish socialism.



# THE LENINIST

## Supplement

# IRELAND

## Part I

Jack Conrad

IN THE 1840s and 1850s Marx and Engels considered that Ireland would be liberated through the triumph of proletarian revolution in Britain itself. But later, in the 1860s, they came to the conclusion that if anything it would be the other way round, that the victory of the national movement in Ireland would be the spark that would ignite the class struggle in Britain. With the "loss of Ireland", wrote Marx, "the class war in England, till now somnolent and chronic, will assume acute forms" (Marx and Engels *Ireland and the Irish Question* p404).

Thus for Marx a central component for revolution in Britain became the necessity of breaking the chain that bound the working class to the policy of the bourgeoisie over Ireland; in fact, for the workers in Britain he declared "the national emancipation of Ireland is no question of abstract justice or humanitarian sentiment, but the first condition for their own social emancipation." (*Ibid* p408.)

Lenin praised the position Marx and Engels developed on Ireland as a model of proletarian internationalism and relevant for all communists:

"The policy of Marx and Engels on the Irish question serves as a splendid example of the attitude the proletariat of the oppressor nations should adopt towards national movements, an example which has lost none of its practical importance..."

"If the Irish and English proletariat had not accepted Marx's policy and had not made the succession of Ireland their slogan, this would have been the worst sort of opportunism, a neglect of their duties as democrats and socialists, and a concession to English reaction and the English bourgeoisie." (VI Lenin, *CW*, Vol 20 p442).

This was the position advanced by the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain; it maintained a distinct line separate from the bourgeoisie and its servants in the leadership of the Labour Party. What is more, it came out in full support of the cause of Irish republicanism. This is made abundantly clear in a Party pamphlet published in 1921, *The Irish Crisis* by William Paul:

"The Communist Party of Great Britain hails the dauntless fight of the Irish Republicans in their successful struggle against the British Government. Unlike the Labour Party, which does not desire to harass the Government during the present negotiations, we definitely declare that we will gladly yield all the demands made by the Irish Republicans. In lending every assistance to Ireland, it is not only necessary for us to attack the Government, but also warn our Irish friends that the political and trade union leaders of the British Labour Movement are as dangerous to them as ever a Lloyd George or a Hamar Green-

wood. The cowardly ineptitude of the Labour Party in the House of Commons so far as Ireland is concerned is at once humiliating and treacherous. The barefaced betrayers of Ireland and her workers by the British trade union leaders is on a level par with that of the Labour Party. We assure our Irish friends that these elements are being exposed by the Communists." (p.12)

It is neither the purpose of nor do we have room in this study to examine the path traversed by our Party since 1921; suffice to say the CPGB steadily degenerated under the leadership of opportunists, a process programmatically capped and enshrined in the adoption by our Party of the *British Road to Socialism* in 1951. Despite this, on Ireland the 1951 *BRS* and the next three subsequent editions maintained the vestiges, the remnants of a principled position. Thus the 1968 fourth version of the *BRS* was able to state that:

"The enforced partition of Ireland should be ended and British troops withdrawn from Northern Ireland, leaving the Irish people free to realise their united republic." (p37)

The fact that the leadership around John Gollan maintained this position on Ireland in 1968 had not a jot to do with his 'anti-revisionism', a block-headed epithet some have subsequently bestowed on him, far from it. No, Gollan and his myopic crew called for a united Ireland and troops out simply because the somnolent state of the national struggle in Ireland lulled them into a state of drowsiness on the question. The proof that their position on Ireland was nothing more than a carryover from the Leninist past of our Party; the proof of Gollan's contempt for even his own particular version of the *BRS* came almost before the ink was dry. For, less than a year after the fourth version of the *BRS* came off the press, the national struggle rudely imposed reality on the sleepy revisionists. While thousands marched for civil rights, while B Special and loyalist thugs launched anti-Catholic pogroms, and the nationalist population demanded that 'old rusty guns' (the IRA) defend the Catholic areas, our revisionists' faces first turned red with embarrassment and then purple with rage because the Irish had had the temerity to overturn their ever so cleverly concocted programme. Indeed, for the Gollan opportunists themselves it stood exposed because of its very lack of opportunism, something they swiftly rectified in practice. But for this opportunist practice to be united with the Party programme nine years passed, nine years in which not a day passed when the leadership and the *Morning Star* did not violate their own programme.

In 1969 the opportunists quickly buried their programmatic pronouncements on Ireland and substituted comfortable opportunism. In a joint call by the Communist Party of Great Britain, the Irish Workers' Party, and the Communist Party of Northern Ireland the demand was made for a "democratic solution" to the problems

in the Six Counties. But this "democratic solution" did not include the withdrawal of troops, let alone a united Ireland; instead of these democratic demands the plea was made to the Labourite Prime Minister Harold Wilson for him to ensure that 'progressive' reforms were carried out — using the daft logic (admittedly nothing strange in this from the opportunists) that as Britain had caused the problem it "must therefore take action to solve it without delay." (CPGB leaflet August 3, 1969). Resistance to state and Paisleyite terror; the use of molotov cocktails, bombs, and bullets; the building of barricades; the establishment of 'no go areas' by the Catholic masses were for our opportunists not to be welcomed but to be bemoaned. For them the Irish had crossed the Rubicon, or to use a more apt analogy had gone beyond the Pale.

The current, fifth version (1978) of the *BRS* at last corrected the 'aberrations' of all previous editions, ditched their calls for the unconditional withdrawal of troops, their declaration for the abolition of the Six Counties statelet, and the end of the enforced division of Ireland. In place of these basic democratic demands the opportunists have cobbled together a utopian shopping list of reformist demands on the British state, calling for the British government to overcome sectarianism, for the British government to enact economic measures which will revive the Six Counties' flagging industries, for the British state, fairy tale godmother-like, to create the conditions for a united Ireland, something reliant on of all things the consent of loyalism! But let the new *BRS* speak for itself. This is what it now has to say on Ireland:

"Britain", it suggests, "should ensure a democratic solution in Northern Ireland, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights and the end of all repressive measures, the withdrawal of troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended and British troops withdrawn completely. The British government should recognise the right of the majority of the people of Ireland to rule the whole of their country, and should co-operate with their representatives in bringing this about by consent." (p43).

Here we have unexpiated, unadulterated proof of our Party leadership's advocacy of a 'positive colonial policy' à la Eduard Bernstein, who recommended to the German working class the "civilising work" of the Kaiser's imperial armed forces in the colonies. Our own opportunists recommend to the oppressed the progressive role moribund British imperialism can play in Ireland, insisting, as if dealing with a small child, that as it caused the 'mess' in Ireland it must clear it up. Of course this is nothing but transparent sophistry, for using such 'logic' our

comrades would end up demanding that as the Nationalist Party regime in South Africa caused the 'mess' of apartheid it must pass 'progressive' legislation to overcome racism; that United States' imperialism should have been forced to unite Vietnam — they were after all responsible for maintaining the 'mess' of division. Our opportunists stand exposed: for when it is a matter of abstract principle the opportunists are quite prepared to mouth anything, but as soon as it comes to putting that principle into practice then it is a different matter. How else are we to explain the somersault performed in 1969 and the abandonment by the Gollan leadership of its own programmatic position on Ireland?

For Leninism imperialism is the domination of production by finance capital, a definite stage in the development of capitalism: its last. But for the *BRS* imperialism has become a policy which can, if there is sufficient will, be broken from as one would break from the habit of smoking tobacco. This fallacy underpins the opportunists' attitude towards Ireland. We can see this from the last comprehensive pamphlet on Ireland published by the leadership (in 1975!) *Northern Ireland: a programme for action* by Irene Brennan (remember her?):

"The present sufferings of the people of the Six Counties," said Irene Brennan, "are a direct result of the policies adopted by successive British governments ... both Labour and Tory governments have been pursuing repressive, reactionary, so-called 'bipartisan' policies... If the Labour government continues to operate these Tory policies there is a grave danger that there will be a conflagration of sectarian violence that will engulf the whole of Northern Ireland... The British government faces a crucial choice — either to continue its present disastrous course, or to break finally with the policies of imperialism... there must be a decisive change in British government policy ... What is needed is a completely new policy" (pp4-5, our emphases).

But if this isn't stretching our orthodox communist patience beyond breaking point the opportunists maintain that British monopolies are striving with might and main to unite Ireland. What stops them, or so we are to believe, is the Unionist capitalists and the reactionary ideology of Orangeism.

"The interests of the Unionists and those of monopoly capitalism are now no longer identical. The latter wishes to dispense with the border in order to lay the whole of Ireland open to economic exploitation on a more massive scale." (*Ibid*, p.10)

This egregious view of the progressive role of British imperialism is not confined to comrade Brennan, who is now considered to be on the quirky fringe of the Party with her calls for us to drop our anti-religious "prejudices". No, the same point has been made by a whole range of different opportunist



shades, from comrade Jimmy Stewart of the CPI: "for British monopoly capitalism the economic and political division of the island of Ireland was becoming a redundant solution" (*Marxism Today* August 19, 1975 p235) to our very own General Secretary Gordon McLennan, for whom British imperialism is seeking the "political reunification" of Ireland (*Britain and the Irish Crisis* p19).

Because of this these comrades consider that the armed struggle of the oppressed led by the Provisional IRA and the INLA is not merely delaying the realisation of a united Ireland but is in itself a major stumbling block to progress. It is at the feet of the national liberation forces that the opportunists lay the blame for deepening sectarianism; they are also held responsible for the violence of the forces of oppression and the absence of meaningful solidarity from the labour movement in Britain:

"The Provisionals' campaign of violence further provided an excuse to reaction in Northern Ireland to build up its extreme right-wing armed bodies... Progressive opinion in Britain itself was alienated, so making it much more difficult to establish a much needed solidarity movement with the anti-Unionists." (Irene Brennan *Northern Ireland: a programme for action* p17)

Again, these views are not the deranged ravings of some political hasbeen, but represent the essence of the opportunists' views of the armed struggle in the Six Counties. Comrade Bert Ward, the secretary of the CPGB's National Advisory on Ireland, although he objects to being "called opportunist by the self styled Leninists in Britain," comes out in his full opportunist colours by declaring that the armed struggle of the IRA "welds" the "Protestant workers" to "their Unionist masters." (*Ireland* December 1983). This excuse for a communist actually has the temerity to blame the IRA for fascist violence in Britain, and moronically declares the use of arms in the Six Counties "not necessary" because, believe it or not, "Sinn Fein have a bookshop in Dublin and Belfast. They publish a weekly newspaper .... which is publicly on sale." Comrade Ward's method of determining the correctness of taking up arms is based on the fact that repression is more severe in South Africa than the wonderfully free and democratic Six Counties. Using this weird logic our cretinous opportunist maintains that only when it is would it be legitimate to take up arms, and even then comrade Ward still has "moral" doubts about it because "the only people who believe it is morally correct to kill and maim people are those who believe in retributive justice"; apparently socialists do "not fall into this category". (*Ireland*, February 1984). That such whacky yellow pacifism is published by an official Party publication only shows the depths that degeneration has gone to in the CPGB; that the dunderhead comrade Ward is secretary of the National Advisory on Ireland says even more.

For genuine communists armed struggle is a tactical question not a matter of abstract "morality"; it is certainly not based on some comparative scoreboard of repression in South Africa, or even on the lack of democracy. The Bolsheviks took up arms against Kerensky's petty bourgeois socialist government not because it was going to introduce apartheid or some other such appalling measure, but in essence because Lenin thought they could win the day for proletarian socialism. Our morality is born of the class struggle and is determined by the interests of the working class. It is the same considerations that have underpinned all communist moves towards armed struggle and insurrection; the fact our people have been maimed or killed in the class struggle is of course unfortunate. As to the class enemy and its hirelings: we will not lose any sleep.

But in the Six Counties we are not

weighing up the question of whether or not communists should launch an armed struggle. We are faced by an armed struggle of the oppressed, not against the Protestants, as the Tories, Fleet Street, and a range of opportunists from *Militant* to comrade Ward imply, but an armed struggle against the British state and its local agents. It is an armed struggle that is in progress; yes, it is led by petty bourgeois nationalists — modern day Fenians; yes, they make tactical blunders; yes, they show all the prejudices and instability of petty bourgeois revolutionaries; but the main campaigning question for communists in Britain, the oppressor country, is not the advisability of this or that action, let alone the legitimacy of armed struggle. No, we should be supporting in words and deeds the liberation movement against our own imperialism. In fact we must give unconditional support. Anything else only plays into the hands of reaction in Britain and is the most revolting opportunism, which far from advancing the struggle in Britain fosters national chauvinism in the working class.

It is ironic that while the CPGB leadership made its central campaigning demand for the Six Counties the end to violence, called for the republican forces to lay down their arms, and castigated the Provisionals for being elitist and having no mass base, other communist parties hailed the IRA as freedom fighters and indeed when Bobby Sands died his martyr's death, in contrast to the CPGB's complete lack of campaigning for the hunger strikers, other parties (for example the communist parties in France and the United States) participated in and even led mass demonstrations denouncing British imperialism and supporting the demands of the republican prisoners.

The acid test of proletarian internationalism is of course not the denunciation of some other imperialist country, but your own. So the fact that in the face of a world chorus attacking the British presence in Ireland, the fact that even the Straight Leftists have chosen to hide behind the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI) and join hands with liberals in calling for Britain to declare some future intention of withdrawal is a vivid illustration of the extent social chauvinism has penetrated the ranks of our CPGB.

Does our position of unconditional support mean that it is incorrect to criticise the national liberation movement in Ireland? No, far from it. But criticism of a national liberation movement is only legitimate from the firm ground of unconditional support; in other words, we must criticise only while completely opposing 'our' imperialism and defending Sinn Fein, the IRSP, the IRA, and the INLA against attacks from British imperialism, and cultivating a fraternal attitude towards the Irish masses from the working class in Britain. As to the nature of criticism, this should not be based on this or that action but should flow from our understanding of the petty bourgeois nature of the present liberation movement and the necessity for working class leadership in the national struggle.

Our commitment to proletarian internationalism demands that we recognise the inherent limitations of Sinn Fein; to pretend that limitations do not exist, to project Sinn Fein as some sort of fully developed revolutionary socialist organisation is not only simplistic but throws dust into the eyes of the working class in Britain and Ireland and thereby holds back the working class from the necessity of gaining political independence from all other classes.

But while our criticisms of Sinn Fein are primarily determined by its class nature this is not the case with the Communist Party of Ireland, which we criticise for overt opportunism. In a mirror image of those who give Sinn Fein uncritical support, there are those in our Communist Party, for example the Straight Leftists, who demand that our comrades in the CPI be given the same treatment. Of course, these

centrists are almost as violently hostile to the liberation movement in Ireland as that unsavoury creep, comrade Bert Ward. "They know the conditions best," the gabble of centrists declare. And therefore it is proclaimed unprincipled, nay uncommunist, to criticise a fraternal party. This naturally does not apply to parties like the Albanian, the Spanish, or the Italian. But one should not expect consistency from centrists. Because through their clumsy transformation of proletarian internationalism into its opposite — diplomatic internationalism — they are excused from thinking. It is this which lies behind their unwillingness to criticise the CPI, let alone contemplate what the tasks of communists in Ireland should be and what they should not be.

This is not the case with Leninists, who consider it their communist duty to state their differences openly. So if we think a fraternal party is making important mistakes, or especially when we think a party is in the grip of opportunism, we will voice our concern in the hope that this will play a part in helping to overcome problems. The struggle against opportunism cannot and must not be confined to national boundaries; to suggest such a thing is only to objectively play into the hands of the bourgeoisie. We make no apology for our open criticism and our open debate and discussion. We believe our position is fully in line with the theory and practice of Lenin. For instance, when faced with communists from Britain who declared that communists know the conditions best in their own country and therefore there should be no outside 'interference' about their attitude toward the Labour Party; Lenin replied that "The old International... used the method of referring such questions for decision to the individual parties in the countries concerned. We may not be fully familiar with the conditions in one country or another, but in this case we are dealing with the principles underlying a Communist Party's tactics. This is very important and in the name of the Third International, we must clearly state the communist point of view." (VI Lenin, CW, Vol31 p257, our emphases.)

For us the dissolution of the Comintern did not lessen the need for proletarian internationalism and its importance to the class struggle — far from it. It is because of this that we feel obliged to advance our views on Ireland even if this includes criticism of our comrades in Ireland.

### 1. A Brief Background

Since the triumph of capitalism in England, Ireland has been systematically sucked dry, not as in the past by marauding armies but by the incalculably more devastating forces of the market mechanism. Subjected to a forced marriage in 1801, Ireland has been drained of both people and wealth, sacrificed on the altar of profit. For example it has been estimated that in the eighteenth century the great Anglo-Irish families which owned three-quarters of all agricultural land secured revenues equivalent in 1980 money terms to that obtained from North Sea oil and gas today.

The plunder of its first colony was a major source of primitive capital accumulation; it was to Ireland that Britain owed much of its early industrial and commercial boom. While British capitalists and landlords prospered the Irish peasantry were crushed into poverty, and the country reduced to being undeveloped, purely agrarian, and semi-barbarous. The Act of Union of 1801 was a sequel to the suppression of the Irish rising of 1798; the subsequent military occupation and brutal coercion 'persuaded' the Irish Parliament to 'consent' to the Union. This robbed Ireland of the limited authority which had been gained under the pressure of the American War of Independence of 1775-83 and the French Revolution of 1789-94. Union meant the abolition of the Irish Parliament and the lifting of

protective tariffs. This resulted in the snuffing out of Ireland's budding industrial revolution, and as a consequence the populace had, in Marx's words, to choose "between the occupation of land, at any rent, or starvation" (Marx and Engels *Ireland and the Irish Question*, p142). After the repeal of the corn laws in 1846 the Irish peasantry found itself victim of mass eviction, as the aristocratic English landlords callously sought the extinction of the peasant farmers and their replacement by more profitable large scale cattle ranching.

The Great Famine that gripped Ireland from 1845 to 1850 exacerbated the already dire poverty suffered by the peasantry: it also epitomised the nature of the Union. For while millions died or were forced to emigrate over the Atlantic, vast amounts of food were shipped the other way over the St George's Channel.

Famine and mass eviction drained the country of its people: between 1845 and 1851 one and a half million either died of starvation or emigrated, the population being reduced from eight million to six and a half million. But this was only the most dramatic reduction of Ireland's population: it was only in the 1970s when the drying up of employment and emigration possibilities in the United States and Britain ended the haemorrhaging.

The colonisation of Ireland and its subsequent plundering provoked energetic and often desperate resistance. The Middle Ages saw the clans fight the Anglo-Norman incursion; the 16th and 17th centuries, the period of final conquest, saw two general insurrections, 1641-52 and 1689-91. And at the end of the eighteenth century the American War of Independence and the French Revolution inspired Irish patriots into a rising against rule from London. This 1789 rising was a genuinely revolutionary struggle for national independence, a popular uprising which sought to emancipate the Catholic peasantry, while at the same time striving to overcome the discord between them and the Protestants. 1848 witnessed the Young Ireland attempt at insurrection; in their wake were the Fenians who in 1867 also attempted an insurrection, and following their defeat came the Home Rule agitation and the Land League of Charles Stewart Parnell.

Throughout most of the eighteenth century the national liberation movement in Ireland was led in the main by disaffected elements of the aristocracy and urban bourgeoisie. The emergence of the United Irishmen at the end of the century marked their decline and the broadening of the struggle so that it was "no longer to remove disabilities from the Catholic upper and middle class, but to emancipate the Irish peasant, for the vast part Catholic. The question became social as to its matter, assumed French political principles as to its form, remained national" (Marx and Engels *Ireland and the Irish Question* p175).

But it was only with the dawning of the twentieth century that the working class decisively stepped onto the stage, not only as an important element in Irish society, but as potentially the most determined and consistent champion of national freedom. Britain's perfection of the strategy of divide and rule had successfully set Protestant worker against Catholic worker, thus considerably sapping the strength of the working class in Ireland; despite this, in Dublin under the leadership of the likes of Connolly and Larkin working class militancy reached revolutionary heights. In 1913 a General Strike gripped Dublin; starvation; betrayal by the TUC bureaucracy in Britain, and naked state terror eventually forced the workers to capitulate, but despite this savage defeat the Dublin proletariat maintained its militancy. With the outbreak of world war in August 1914, Irish socialists, along with the Bolsheviks, opposed the inter-imperialist conflict and called for the turning of the imperialist war into a war for liberation. Outside Liberty Hall, the



HQ of the Irish T&GWU, Connolly had hung a banner which summed up the approach of the proletarian vanguard: "We serve neither King nor Kaiser, but Ireland."

Connolly understood the necessity of linking the workers' struggle to that of national liberation, something concretised when the Irish Citizens' Army (a workers' militia formed during the great General Strike of 1913) joined the nationalist Irish Volunteers in staging the Easter Rising. Unfortunately, despite the extremely favourable conditions for working towards a widespread insurrection, the leaders of the Easter Rising including Connolly provided no central role for the broad working masses. It turned out to be an essentially military affair which was quickly isolated by the British forces and, despite heroic resistance, easily crushed. The failure of the Easter Rising decapitated the working class movement, depriving it of its most experienced and, what is more, revolutionary leaders.

In the aftermath of the Easter Rising the leadership of the workers' movement shifted to the right and opted out of the national struggle. As a result, hegemony over the struggle passed to the previously stunted bourgeois nationalist Sinn Féin. At the time of the Easter Rising Sinn Féin was practically confined to one central branch in Dublin. Some idea of the respective strengths of Sinn Féin and the workers' movement can be gained from a comparison of the circulation of their papers. Sinn Féin's had a weekly average of only 2,000 while Connolly's *The Irish Worker* averaged between 20,000 and 30,000, and during periods of intense struggle circulation had soared to almost 95,000. Sinn Féin took no direct part in the Easter Rising, although some of the Irish Volunteers did have joint membership. Despite this, Arthur Griffith the leader of Sinn Féin refused to support the uprising as he had refused to support the 1913 General Strike. Fortunately for Sinn Féin the leaders of the workers' movement in Ireland shied away from the task of building a mass vanguard workers' party which would take the lead in the struggle for national independence; instead they actually assisted Sinn Féin in winning by-elections and handed over national leadership to Sinn Féin, concentrating their main efforts on building the Irish T&GWU. In the December 1918 General Election there were not even any candidates from the workers' movement; this abstention in favour of Sinn Féin was claimed to be for the 'national interest'. Sinn Féin as a result scored a sweeping electoral victory, winning 73 out of a total of 105 Irish seats.

In January 1919 thirty of the newly elected Sinn Féin MPs (many others were in prison) met in Dublin and issued a declaration of independence, constituting themselves as an Irish Parliament — the Dáil Éireann. It demanded the withdrawal of British troops and in defiance of the British state it set up its own courts, appointed ministers, levied taxes, and gave the Irish Republican Army (previously the Irish Volunteers) the role of being the Dáil's police force. In fact Sinn Féin's overall aim was to create an independent state machine. But Sinn Féin, because it was a bourgeois nationalist party, wanted to establish an Irish government under which the Irish bourgeoisie could exploit Ireland. Because of this the Dáil opposed agrarian revolution, and stood with the landowners against land occupations by the poor peasants, using the IRA to maintain existing property relations.

### 1.1. Ireland Dissected

In the nineteenth century Ireland was almost entirely an agricultural country; the development of industry was confined mainly to the northeast, where because of British encouragement capitalist relations were fostered. As a result, by the end of the century in Belfast and its environs shipbuilding, engineering, and textiles had grown into large scale industries on the basis of exploiting the vast markets of the

British Empire. This confined development of industry went hand in hand with the division in the working class between the Protestants, who gave their loyalty to the authorities in return for employment and other privileges, and the Catholics, who were either relegated to the bottom of the labour market or forced to emigrate.

As a result of the uneven development of industry, its basis on sales to the British Empire, and the privileged position of the Protestant working class, the demand for Irish independence was fiercely opposed in the area where capitalism had developed highest. In 1913 when Home Rule looked like becoming a real possibility Protestants enthusiastically took up arms under Carson in order to prevent it.

The distorted class relations meant that the struggle for national independence found itself greatly weakened. Britain could rely on the Belfast capitalists and the Protestant working class against the stunted nationalist bourgeoisie, which found support from the petty bourgeois masses and the relatively small working class in the south. The nationalist bourgeoisie lacked the 'muscle', the determination, and the courage to achieve more than a formal independence from Britain.

By 1921 it had become vital for Britain to reestablish a stable bourgeois regime in Ireland. The Black and Tan War which had gripped Ireland since early 1920 threatened to push the country towards total social upheaval — the agrarian revolution which constantly threatened to erupt, and the experience of general strike in 1913 and insurrection in 1916 could, under conditions of war, be moulded into a new and much more pernicious danger to imperialism than the one presented by Sinn Féin. As a result, the British created a parliament in Stormont to administer a new statelet in six of Ulster's nine counties (to include the other three would have created too even a division between Catholics and Protestants), and in December 1921 after several months of negotiations the British government signed a treaty with de Valera, representing the Dáil, which created the Irish Free State in the remaining twenty-six counties.

Opposition to the treaty split Sinn Féin and developed into a civil war underlying which was the land hunger of the small farmers and the petty bourgeois masses which, having been driven into action against Britain by the 1919-21 agricultural depression (caused by Britain being able to obtain food on the world market following the war), were determined to gain full independence and through it land. The civil war lasted fifteen months, but with the help of Britain the Free State forces succeeded in crushing resistance and establishing a dictatorship of the capitalist class in close alliance with and dependent on British imperialism. Thus the bourgeoisie treacherously abandoned the struggle for national independence.

Connolly had declared that under partition: "the betrayal of national democracy of industrial Ulster would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements whilst it endured." (*The Irish Worker* March 14 1914).

And indeed Connolly's words proved prophetic. In the Six Counties anti-Catholic pogroms broke out, and to add official fuel to the sectarian fire the British state introduced the Special Powers Act in 1922 which gave the Stormont regime sweeping, draconian powers including internment. The British state also formed local paramilitary organs, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the notorious B Specials. But as well as the overtly repressive measures, other measures were enacted to ensure the continued domination of the Six Counties by Britain and its Unionist satraps. Elections took place on the basis of monstrous gerrymandering, the result of which was that many areas with a Catholic majority suffered uninter-

rupted Unionist control of local councils. Because of this it was possible to command considerable patronage in the form of jobs, housing, and other privileges, something that helped to ensure the loyalty of the Protestant working class to the link with Britain.

In the Twenty-Six Counties equally repressive legislation was passed in order to suppress opposition to the division of Ireland. Even when de Valera, elected into government in 1932 on a reformist bourgeois nationalist programme, attempted to loosen the Prometheus-like chains that bound the 'Free State' to the British economy, the end result was only a lowering of the living standards of the masses (national income per head dropped from 61% of the British figure in 1931 to 49% in 1939), and its status as a neo-colony confirmed. In an attempt to make the country a 'self contained unit' and to force the British government to compromise on its determination to keep Ireland in a state of total dependence, de Valera introduced protectionism. Westminster's intransigence, six years of trade war, and the general state of the world economy throughout the 1930s left Ireland badly battered and still utterly reliant on Britain. In 1932, 96% of exports from Ireland went to Britain, and at no time up to 1938 did the percentage fall below ninety.

So the dissection of Ireland did not break the mould established in the nineteenth century. Ireland was preserved as a source of cheap food, military recruits, and workers, and as an important outlet for British manufactured goods. What is more, the treaty did not disrupt the links between British capital and Ireland's main centre of industry, in Ulster. The dissection ensured that Britain maintained its domination of Ireland as a whole; the divisions between Protestant and Catholic workers fostered in the nineteenth century were reinforced and frozen; and in the Twenty-Six Counties the previously militant working class was swept behind de Valera's Fianna Fail programme of self-sufficient development.

## 2. Imperialism and Ireland

Although in 1921 the Six Counties contained the bulk of Ireland's industry and 42% of its workers, its industrialisation was dependent on the world market to an extent unusual at the time. Its main industries, textiles, engineering, and shipbuilding, which accounted for 50% of the workforce, boomed during the war years of 1914-18, but with the end of hostilities orders slumped. Not only that, but the effects of general crisis and the resultant fierce competition from more efficient rivals led to production and employment plummeting.

Table One  
Unemployed as a percentage  
of insured workers in the  
Six Counties

Years	
1921	18
1926	25
1927-29	15
1932	27
1938	28.3

(FSL Lyons Ireland Since  
the Famine p.710)

The Belfast shipyards vividly illustrate the devastation: the workforce declined from 20,000 in 1924 to a mere 2,000 in 1933.

The bleak picture of stagnation came to a momentary end in the years of the Second World War. Shipbuilding, engineering, and textiles again boomed, along with newer industries such as aircraft, as Britain's war machine consumed all that they could turn out. Workers' incomes rose from three fifths of the average British level in 1939 to three quarters during the war. But as in 1918 the end of the war orders saw industry in the Six Counties slip into a lethargic state and wage rates relative to Britain fall.

The Second World War saw Britain

emerge victorious, as it had in the First, against Germany's attempt to redivide the world economy. But this time Britain's 'Johnny came lately' ally, the United States, did not furstratedly return to 'splendid isolation'. No, this time the United States demanded and could not be refused its pound of flesh. In the face of European devastation and weakness the United States demanded the dismantling of the old empires which had in the twentieth century come to be the greatest block to the development and operation of the world economy's most dynamic capitals. What Germany had attempted in 1914 and 1939 with blood and iron the United States successfully achieved in the aftermath of the Second World War. Within a decade or so of 1945 the mighty empires were either dismantled or were in the process of being dismantled.\* The fetters they placed on the world economy were broken and the entire capitalist world was redivided and opened to the penetration of United States capital. The removal of the barriers to accumulation, especially the barrier presented by the British Empire, which covered 13.3 million square miles and had a population of 500 million (or just under 1/4 of the earth's population), meant that the world economy enjoyed an unprecedented boom which lasted over twenty years spanning the 1950s and 1960s.

The great boom initially had its greatest impact on the advanced capitalist countries themselves, but as the tendency for the rate of profit to decline inevitably began to take effect, finance capital strove to open up new areas to exploitation through the export of capital. Thus it was at the tail end of the boom, under the lash of the declining rate of profit and the need to increase the mass of profit that countries like Brazil, South Korea, and Taiwan experienced a rapid growth of industry. Such countries yielded higher rates of profit than the metropolitan centres because of their relatively backward development and the availability of a plentiful supply of cheap labour which if it became too restive would be put down by the cooperative local state.

So although the Twenty-Six Counties' economic performance had been as lacklustre as the Six Counties', the drive by the imperialist powers to stave off the decline in their profit rates saw the country transformed from stagnation to the "fastest growing economy in Europe during the 1970s" (*Financial Times* March 6 1981). Compared with the EEC which had an average growth rate of only 1.9% in its industrial production between 1970 and 1981, the Twenty-Six Counties experienced an average growth rate of 4.3%.

Table Two  
Twenty-Six Counties' Average  
Growth per annum

Years	
1926-38	1.2%
1939-47	0.0%
1947-53	1.8%
1953-63	2.0%

(FSL Lyons Ireland Since  
the Famine p.624)

This growth was primarily based on the arrival of more than 800 foreign firms since 1975, which invested £2.5 billion at 1981 historic prices. As a result, areas which "once exported only people or animals on the hoof

\* We in no way belittle the heroic role played by the Soviet Army in defeating Nazi Germany and promoting national liberation. But it must be noted that while the Soviet Union fought a revolutionary war (resulting in the successful emergence of socialism in many countries in Eastern Europe) the Western allies were fighting an imperialist war to prevent redivision of the world market by Germany. Although the United States subsequently sought to encircle the world socialist system, it only fought against the emergence of 'independent' states from the womb of empire when they looked like taking a too radical course. The majority of the ex-colonial countries in fact only exchanged the chains of empire for the chains of neo-colonialism, which given the dynamic of United States capital meant domination by the United States.



are now sending out electronic, consumer, and health care goods for the world market." (*Financial Times* April 16 1982). Investment in the Twenty-Six Counties was primarily based on the so-called 'new industries': high tech, capital intensive industry. In 1966 these 'new industries' accounted for only 11% of gross output and 9% of the workforce, but by 1976 the respective figures were 52% and 42%; and in 1983 new technology made up 38% of the country's total exports — computer equipment and chemicals alone sharing 28%. The rate of return on these investments was extremely healthy: between 1977 and 1980 the average return on United States' investment in the Twenty-Six Counties was 33.7%, twice the European average. In 1983 total profits for foreign companies was estimated to be £1.2 billion and after a government statistical investigation estimates of the amount of profit they repatriated was upped by £500 million, to £1.7 billion.

The industrialisation of the Twenty-Six Counties was sparked off mainly because of its potential as a springboard from which the transnational companies, the imperialist monopolies can export to the great markets of Britain and the EEC (see Table Three). Because of this, exports have grown massively and now account for around 58% of the Twenty-Six Counties' GDP, compared with Italy's 19%, Federal Germany's 25%, and France's 20%.

**Table Three**  
**Twenty Six Counties' Pattern of Trade in 1979**  
(percentage of total)

Country	Imports	Exports
EEC	72	77.0
UK	50	46.4
Federal Germany	7	9.0
France	5	8.0
United States	9	5.0

(*Financial Times* March 6 1981)

But in order to sustain this industrialisation and new foreign investment, the Twenty Six Counties government was forced to offer transnational companies what the IDA (Industrial Development Authority) called "The tax deal of the century", which meant no tax on the export of profits until 1990, and then only a maximum of 10% on all profits to the end of the century. Other incentives included direct subsidies in the form of grants of as much as 50% of fixed assets, and interest free loans. Consequently public spending has grown rapidly — far outstripping the growth of GDP. Its percentage of GDP rose from 33% in 1960 to 58% in 1975, and to 66% in 1983. Only countries such as Sweden and Denmark have similar levels, but they have far higher per capita incomes. Comparing the figures for other countries when they had the same per capita income as the Twenty-Six Counties has now (approximately £2,180), Britain was spending 34% on public expenditure, Sweden 30%, and the United States 25%.

**Table Four**  
**Government Spending in selected countries in the years they had the equivalent of current Twenty-Six Counties' income**

Country	Year	Total government spending as a percentage of GDP
Britain	1963	34
United States	1950	25
Sweden	1956	30
Japan	1969	19
Federal Germany	1960	32
Netherlands	1962	34

(*Financial Times* November 10 1983)

Such government spending is dictated by the needs of the imperialist monopolies, and in the Twenty-Six Counties has only been possible through massive deficit financing resulting in the accumulation of a total government debt by 1983 of £11.5 billion, some £5 billion of which is foreign debt — mostly in dollars and Deutsche marks — representing a per

capita foreign debt of £1,500, making the Twenty-Six Counties' per capita debt one of the highest in the world, far higher than Poland or even Mexico. The Twenty-Six Counties is in fact up to its neck in debt to imperialism in the form of the banks. The scale and nature of government borrowing has helped to push up the yearly balance of payments deficit to over 10% of GNP in the early 1980s; repayment difficulties must develop if current trends continue unchecked.\*

The ever expanding government debt to the imperialist banks represents the steady expansion of credit which means commodities can be consumed before they are paid for (one of the most important methods capitalism uses to counteract the tendency for the rate of profit to decline), this allows capital accumulation to continue. Because of this, money supply (M3) soared: 14.1% in 1980 and 18.0% in 1981; and inflation became the highest in the EEC: 18.2% in 1980, and 20% in 1981; along with interest rates in 1981 of between 19% and 22% "well above those of competitors" (*Financial Times* April 16 1982).

While the Twenty-Six Counties is a Western European country, and a member of the EEC, it cannot be considered as an advanced capitalist country because it is exploited and dependent on imperialism. Despite this it is not simply a backward country; in fact it must be classified as a medium developed capitalist country, for in comparison with the backward countries it has developed a fairly high level of industrialisation, capitalist relations have permeated society, and domestic monopoly capitalist relations have emerged.

In 1930 75% of exports from the Twenty-Six Counties were live animals and only 6% were manufactured goods. This picture had dramatically changed by 1981, mainly because of foreign investment when 60% of exports were manufactured (80% of which are accounted for foreign firms — which also export most of their profits). Alongside the growth of investments by the imperialist monopolies, in collaboration with them domestic monopolies have appeared and as the result of the concentration and centralisation of capital, there has even been the development of Irish transnationals.

\*\*The brewing industry is dominated by the internationally known Guinness group; glass is dominated by the almost equally well known name of Waterford; milling is divided by the British Rank Hovis and the Irish Odlums Group; cement is a virtual duopoly controlled by Readymix and Cement Roadstone, which earns nearly a third of its profits overseas and has acquired holdings in the United States, Britain, and the Netherlands. The company has also invested £30 million in a joint venture with Hepworth Ceramic to produce sea water magnesia for the refractory industry worldwide. Housebuilding is dominated by the Abbey Group and McInere Properties, biscuits by Jacobs, and tobacco by two transnationals, the United States' Gallaghers and Britain's Players, along with the Irish PJ Carroll & Son. The Jefferson Smurfit group monopolises the paper and packaging industry, and also operates internationally. United States' operations accounting for 46% of the group's sales and 60% of its assets: this group hopes to secure its position as a transnational and provide venture capital for Irish industry by establishing an Ireland based bank in partnership with the major French banking group Paribas.

The full extent of the concentration of industry in the Twenty-Six Counties can be seen by the fact that in 1975 the top eight industrial companies on the Irish Stock Exchange accounted for 64% of all quoted industrial profits. Agriculture is equally monopolised: the top five coops accounted for 76% of all agribusiness profits. What is more, industrial capital has merged with banking capital to form finance capital. By 1976 four banks, the Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish, the Midland, and

National Westminster accounted for 88.03% of all lending on the Irish money market, and the big Irish two between them now have 60% of the market share in financing industry. The development of finance capital can be seen in the fact that seven of the top eight industrial companies in the *Irish Times* Industrial Index have a debt/equity ratio which averages 95%; agriculture showed the same pattern with the cooperatives deeply in debt to the big banks. The power of the banks is also illustrated by the number of directorships held by the leading bankers, the 32 directors of the Bank of Ireland and the Allied Irish Bank holding between them 260 industrial and commercial directorships, including directorships in all the top ten industrial companies.

The formation of finance capital, whatever the general economic level of a particular country, brings with it the striving to expand outwards. As we have shown, Irish capitalism has already manifested this striving to a certain extent, but finance capital in medium developed capitalist countries such as Ireland is in all respects, in both capital and technology, very weak compared with the giant transnationals, the imperialist monopolies. These giants have sales far exceeding the Twenty-Six Counties' entire GNP of around £7 billion. Exxon for example, the world's largest transnational monopoly, has annual sales worth £66.7 billion, the Anglo-Dutch Shell £54.8 billion, and Mitsubishi £40.2 billion (*The Times* December 2 1983). While it is true that the decline of the colonial empires enabled small advanced capitalist countries like Switzerland, New Zealand, and Denmark, to join in the imperialist exploitation of the world, in general for medium developed countries this door is closed. Of course certain of these countries, for example because of vast size, rich resources, abundant reserves of oil, or substantial populations, could join the imperialist club, could make the transition to becoming imperialist; but for the greater number this is impossible, nothing more than a pipe dream. Thus Ireland, because of its small population and size, lack of natural resources, and low level of native accumulation, has no hope of becoming imperialist. Its native capital can only operate in cooperation with imperialism. It thus participates as a partner in the exploitation of its own country by imperialism; the local monopolies are therefore collaborating monopolies.

So modern Irish capital has in the main developed in the shadow of imperialism, its state serving the interests of both the native and the imperialist monopolies. Not only that but to a large degree Irish capital has merged with imperialism, for foreign monopolies operate extensively from the Twenty-Six Counties, dominate its trade, and own sizeable chunks of 'native' industry. For example Continental Can Inc, the United States' conglomerate, owns 22% of the Jefferson Smurfit group; the United States' Agrico Chemical Ltd controls Ireland's second largest industrial concern, Fitzwilton, which dominates the fertilizer industry; and another United States' giant, Rothman Carreiras, owns half the Irish tobacco company, PJ Carroll & Son. What is more, in the high tech field large numbers of small Irish companies have sprung up for the sole purpose of acting as a servant to the imperialist monopolies and supplying their needs. Thus we can say that the Irish monopolies and budding transnationals have in fact merged with imperialism, forming a single mechanism which exploits the country under the hegemony of imperialism. Irish capitalism therefore acts as an appendage of imperialism.

Although the Twenty-Six Counties is undoubtedly dominated by imperialism, United States' imperialism has now supplanted Britain as the leading investor. Of the 641 overseas companies operating there in 1978, 35.5% were from the United States, 26.9% from Britain, 15.4% from Federal Germany,

and 5.0% from the Netherlands, the rest coming from Japan, and a wide variety of Western European countries. (*Ireland Socialist Review* No 6 Winter 1979/80). This fact has led a number of elements in the workers' movement to speculate about the ending of the specific oppression of Ireland by British imperialism and its replacement by imperialist oppression in general or United States' imperialist oppression in particular.\*\*\* It is of course true that in terms of investment British imperialism no longer maintains its former position, and its share of exports has declined from 81% in 1956 to around 40% in 1981 (3.41% of Britain's imports). Despite this, Britain is still by far the Twenty-Six Counties' leading trading partner, it is still the centre of gravity for its economy: in terms of imports and exports the rest of the EEC combined only accounts for around 30% of its trade (see Table Three), and indeed although a member of the European Monetary System (EMS), 80% of trade is conducted in Sterling and dollars to which its currency is effectively linked. (For Britain itself the Twenty-Six Counties is its fifth most important market with exports valued at more than £2.6 billion). So while there is a political commitment to the EMS, Sterling's rate looms just as large in the Twenty-Six Counties' government calculations as does the EMS (*Financial Times* July 2 1984).

So it is vitally important to see Britain's decline in relative terms. Yes, it has declined, but this has been from a position of total dominance: Britain still remains the sun which the Twenty-Six Counties orbits. Although its economic mix has shifted from agriculture to industry, the Twenty-Six Counties has not established an independent economy. It remains almost totally export orientated; the fact that the EEC accounts for an increasing share of its trade is in no small measure the direct result of Britain itself joining on January 1 1973 — a move the Twenty-Six Counties made simultaneously and automatically. So, far from the Twenty-Six Counties being expansionist in regard to the north or some such nonsense, the Dublin government acts as a collaborator of imperialism, its industries are peripheral, its neutrality is pragmatic, and its growth totally dependent.

But to view the role of British imperialism in Ireland only through the prism of the Twenty-Six Counties would be a fundamental mistake, for Britain dominates the whole of Ireland through not only its economic importance but by its division of the country. Because of the existence of the border, the fact that the Twenty-Six Counties is an integral part of the United Kingdom as well as the Twenty-Six Counties' economic and political dependence on it, Britain remains the main enemy, the main imperialist oppressor.

\* With the rise of the dollar and its impact on interest rates in 1984 the IMF specifically pointed to the Twenty-Six Counties massive debt (£2,000 per head by 1984) as a major area of concern.

\*\*Source for most of the following factual information on industry in the Twenty-Six Counties is from *The Irish Industrial Revolution* published by Repsol in 1978, and from the *Financial Times* survey on Ireland on April 16 1982.

\*\*\* The most notable exponent of this view is the Workers' Party (WP) which has also completely abandoned its republicanism in an attempt to constitute itself as a respectable social democratic party. It brands the national liberation movement as 'fascist' and actively collaborates with British imperialism's propaganda war against Sinn Féin. As a result the party has been reduced to nothing more than a rump in the Six Counties. The Workers' Party advocates that the working class in both parts of Ireland should side with the transnationals, which "we have identified" as "objectively progressive". For the WP the transnationals, if allowed to, would undermine Orange capitalism, destroy sectarianism, and thus create the material conditions for working class and national unity. "The sectarian slaughter (of the Provisionals — JC) blocked these developments and allowed the revival of the dying northern capitalist class as well as giving a lease of life to the southern capitalist class by distracting working class attention from the class struggle to a mythical national question." (*The National Industrial Revolution* pp. 156-157)



September's EC meeting and the crisis in the CPGB

# While the Miners Strike...

David Sherriff

IF THE MINERS' STRIKE has proved one thing and one thing alone it is that the Communist Party remains at the heart of the working class movement. It is still a Party which includes in its ranks a major, indeed a strategic section of the vanguard of the working class.

In his opening to September's EC meeting the Party's Industrial Organiser Pete Carter announced that since the strike began over 80 miners had joined our ranks, 20 in South Wales alone. What is more, significant numbers from the mining communities, especially the wives and girlfriends of miners, those who have set up the Women's Support Groups, have also taken out Party membership.

And as we all know Party members in the NUM have played a leading role. At the top with Mick McGahey, and area level with comrades like Malcolm Pitt, Jack Collins, and George Bolton, right down to grass roots level with lodge secretaries and chairmen too numerous to mention and the manning of picket lines and the running of the Welfare — everywhere in the NUM you will find Communist Party members.

As well as this Party members have been in the forefront when it comes to winning solidarity for the miners from workplaces, trades councils and union committees. They have also been responsible for a tremendous amount of work in Miners' Support Committees from Southend to Salford and from Camden to Cornwall. In short the Communist Party is involved with all aspects of the miners' struggle.

All of this was touched upon by comrade Carter. The trouble is that despite having such an important base in the miners' struggle the Communist Party leadership, as clearly shown by comrade Carter's report, is committed to a thoroughly reformist and economic perspective for the miners and indeed all workers.

Because of this comrade Carter refuses to put forward demands which go beyond those put by the NUM leadership. In the same light the 116th TUC is seen in glowing terms, which whatever shortcomings, communists must enthusiastically greet, their central task being to carry out its resolutions and little more.

This shortsighted tailism was by no means confined to comrade Carter; the entire EC, McLennanites, Euros, even the EC oppositionists failed utterly to see beyond their noses, failed to carry out their supposed vanguard role.

While there was unanimity about the need to unite around the "historic and successful" TUC, differences did open up when it came to the Communist Party-led Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions. Although most of the EC agreed that the lobby of the TUC had been good, most were forced to admit that far from the Liaison Committee playing the dominant role it once would have, it was forced into the background by the Militant-led BLOC, the WRP, and to a lesser extent the SWP. Comrade Lou Lewis was spot on when he characterised the Liaison Committee as a "head with no legs". Because of this there are now leadership moves afoot to revamp the Liaison Committee or launch a new "rank and file organisation".

EC oppositionists, most notably comrades Mike Hicks and Kevin Halpin (Secretary of the Liaison Committee), hit back by blaming the Party leadership itself for the pathetic performance of the Liaison Committee at Brighton, realising that criticism of it was at least in part designed to secure Euro domination over every field of Party industrial work. They

detailed the dilly dallying, how this eventually resulted in the Liaison Committee leaving the actual lobbying of TUC delegates to the petty bourgeois revolutionary groups and the miners themselves while its few supporters met over a mile away from the Brighton Conference Centre.

## The Morning Star

The *Morning Star* question was the subject of National Organiser, Ian McKay's report. He triumphantly announced that the leadership's campaign for 1,000 signatures in order to call a Special General Meeting of the PPPS (the coop which owns the paper) had been exceeded by 231. This the leadership consider an important achievement given that some districts have been "unhelpful" in meeting their assigned targets for signatures, and many branches have refused point blank to participate in the campaign. A number of branches, including Hornsey, Victoria, Poplar, Wanstead/Woodford, Alerton, Goven, Thanet, and the Musicians, have already written to the EC protesting about the moves to call a SGM. Others such as Central Ealing and Peckham have demanded that the differences between the leadership and the Management Committee of the *Morning Star* are settled through fraternal discussions not public debate using the capitalist press.

Despite these protests and the arguments of comrades Hicks and Halpin the EC was not diverted from its course of calling a SGM in order to remove comrades Tony Chater and David Whitfield from their positions of editor and assistant editor, as well as four members of the MC who would not have been "elected at the last AGM had the democratic procedures been followed."

So, shouting the battle cry "restore the old relationship between the *Morning Star* and the Party", armed with the required number of signatures, the leadership threw down the SGM gauntlet to comrade Chater.

Immediately the question on the lips of all Party members was "will Chater take up the challenge?"

The answer came even before the EC was in session. Unfortunately not in the columns of the *Morning Star*, which is increasingly reluctant to publish material relating to the inner-Party struggle. No, instead of reading comrade Chater's views in the Party press we had to turn to the Trotskyite *News Line* which reported that "Chater and his group intend rejecting the Communist Party's call for a special meeting on the grounds that it is unconstitutional" (September 8 1984).

Chater's legalistic ploy exposes him for what he is — a narrow minded opportunist who oozes political cowardice from every pore. Like all cowards he has small possibilities for he fears testing his platform in front of fellow communists.

That large numbers of comrades on the left of the Party support Chater is a tragedy. For by following him like sheep following the Judas goat there is an immense danger that they will find themselves on a course out of communist politics all because they think they can beat the Euros by using the *Morning Star*.

How wrong they are is now being shown. For rather than using Chater he uses them. By commissioning a few pitiful pro-Soviet articles comrade Chater has brought himself a following in the Party. Followers who have been forced to pay the entry fee into the Chater/Costello grouping with principle. Thus the sudden rash of converts to the "positive interpretation" of the revoltingly reformist *British Road*, and the heaping of praise onto the *Star* from those who previously

rubbed it for its revisionism.

## The Party

On the second day of the EC meeting comrade Nina Temple (the leadership's 'expert' on *The Leninist*) gave a report on *Public Work and Party Membership*. On public work the major task seems to be overcoming the problem that "People who've heard of the Party don't know where we stand". What she means by this is that workers still think that being a member of the Communist Party means that one should support the Soviet Union, stand for revolution including the overthrow of parliament, and act in a disciplined fashion. Or as the comrade herself put it "people see... our Party" as being "a clandestine organisation, composed of old men, who have no concern for democracy or the British people and to whom the ends justifies the means."

Comrade Temple proposed spending a huge amount of Party members' money in order to overcome such 'prejudices', and thus win 'people' to the Euro/McLennan position in the Party. This emphasis on winning 'people' not 'workers' has led the leadership to not only organise fringe meetings at the TUC and Labour Party conferences but also at those of the Liberal Party and the SDP (perhaps the Euros are determined to rein their old friend, Sue Slipman).

Such measures are designed to put the CPGB into "the mainstream of British politics", by which is meant bourgeois politics.

Now, although the Party leadership strains might and main to ingratiate itself with the bourgeoisie, even with thousands of pounds being doled out to promote Eurocommunism — including a massive subsidy for *Marxism Today* — even with the Party's position in the NUM, comrade Temple could not disguise the plain fact that Party membership continues to spiral downwards. Since July 1983 it has gone from 15,691 to 14,591 and that of the YCL from a miniscule 627 to a disgraceful 540 — a low point which combined with the Soviets' decision to cut off holiday facilities worth £6,000 per annum has sent rumours buzzing around certain circles that the end is nigh for the League.

Of course for genuine communists while numbers are important they definitely take second place to quality. What is important for us is the political outlook of members, their conviction and discipline. We are not interested in those who merely want to give their spare time to the cause of communism. What we are after are those who are prepared to give their lives.

This is a million miles away from the Euro/McLennan leadership's attitude towards members of the Party. Discipline is only invoked to crush opposition, to prevent initiative. As a result, while they laud the Party's role in the miners' strike there is inevitably another side to the story.

● The Longbridge BL convenor comrade Jack Adams, an EC member, has refused to black coal in the plant despite repeated protests and the threat of a mass picket by the local trades council and Midlands Area NUM.

● The only known Party member in the NUM in the Midlands District is daily scabbing. Efforts to discipline him by his Party branch have been blocked by the Euro run district leadership.

● The Party branch of George Bolton, Party Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Scottish Area NUM, Fishcross/Longannet, has not met since the miners' strike commenced.

## The Factions

Another inevitable result of the leadership's political direction, their wallow-

ing in the marsh of bourgeois respectability, is the fissuring of the Party and the emergence of factions. Comrade Dave Cook declared to the EC that every "branch has its own conception of politics" that there are now "two parties in the CP". This of course is an understatement. For today the CPGB has five major factions.

At the top of the Party are the right opportunists around comrade McLennan, relying for their hold on the Party centre on the Euros and the Party machine in Scotland (which constitutes a not unimportant section of the labour bureaucracy). There are also the Eurocommunists themselves as personified by comrade Cook, the pro-Chater/Costello grouping around the *Morning Star*, the Straight Leftists, and of course the tendency around *The Leninist*.

Evidence of the depravity of the bureaucratic factionalists can be gained from a study of the EC and culled from the various factional publications which emanate from the Party.

The Euros, those self styled "revolutionary democrats" who stand diametrically opposed to revolution, also insult the name of democrat by their shabby dirty dealing. The fact that comrade McLennan won the day on the EC against those who are pushing for a thoroughgoing purge of the Straight Leftists, following their activities at the 38th Congress, has meant that the Euros have attempted their very own mini-purge. Victims include comrade Steve Howell who was suspended from Party membership by his Brightside branch in Sheffield from July 3 for three months. And in Oxford six members of the branch committee were suspended from office by the Euro Midlands District Committee. The fact that the McLennanite dominated Appeals Committee reversed the Oxford decision only indicates the caution of the General Secretary and his supporters not their dislike of administrative methods for solving political problems.

In Scotland the bureaucratic heavy hand is very much in evidence. Oppositionists have been bureaucratically removed from office in the Dundee area, comrade Brian Filling has been "warned about his future conduct", and in Aberdeen two members of the area leadership have been "severely reprimanded".

Of course when the centrist and right opportunist oppositionists get the chance they are not averse to putting in the bureaucratic boot. Who can forget the shameful way last year's PPPS AGM was handled especially in Scotland where fist fights broke out, no challenges to the chair were allowed, and the entire sectional meeting was disenfranchised?

Having got off relatively lightly after their circulation of *Congress Truth* at the 38th Congress the Straight Leftists have become emboldened. They have taken a further step in their building of a party within the Party with the launching of *Communist*, a monthly duplicated inner-Party publication. While its politics, especially its amateurish theorising have some interest, revealing as it does the Straight Leftists' congenital centrism the most important fact about it is simply its existence.

In conclusion let us issue an appeal to all class conscious workers, especially militant miners. Comrades, your places is in the CPGB. Not the CPGB of the liberalistic Euros, nor that of the bureaucratic McLennanites or the *Morning Star*, let alone the Labourite loving CPGB of the Straight Leftists. We call upon you to join the CPGB of *The Leninist*. Join us in our fight to reforge the Communist Party into the revolutionary Marxist-Leninist Party our class so desperately needs.



## Violence and the Miners

## By Any Means Necessary

Alec Long

**"The trade unions know that public support is alienated by violence. They know that's what being British means."**

— Neil Kinnock.

KINNOCK'S statements on the miners' use of violence have been a source of acute embarrassment to many honest Labour Party members, not to mention the hoards of various Trotskyite entryist organisations which are currently calling on workers to join them in the Labourite swamp. Violence, according to Kinnock, is contrary to "all the traditions of the British trade union movement" and in August he even despicably lectured sixty children of South Wales miners on how their dads were playing "Maggie's game". The other half of the 'dream ticket', Roy Hattersley, has been if anything, even more vociferous in denouncing "picket line violence."

The "violence" that the dirty duo find so distasteful is of course the retaliatory violence of the miners against the police — the fact that this strike so far has seen two miners killed, over seven thousand arrested and two thousand injured, some seriously, really does not seem to bother the leaders of the Labour Party unduly. Similarly, Kinnock's quaintly eccentric definition of "Britishness" seems rather selective. After all, every section of the Labour Party, from the so-called 'revolutionary' Militant Tendency to that "inveterate peacemaker" Foot, as Andrew Murray laughably calls him, in effect supported the bloody imperialist adventure in the Falklands/Malvinas. More generally, the Labour Party has shown itself throughout its history to be the most enthusiastic of supporters of the violence of the British capitalist state. It was the Labour Party that sent the troops into Ireland, which brought in the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in order to hound Irish workers and freedom fighters and which on behalf of British imperialism has waged bloody and barbarous wars against the peoples of Cyprus and Kenya to name just two. So evidently, it is not violence *per se* which worries either the Labour Party or, obviously, the Tories. What they are really terrified of and hypocritically condemn as 'un-British' is the violence of the working class against their system — capitalism.

At the core of any state — whether it is a workers' state as in Eastern Europe or a capitalist state — are armed bodies organised to protect certain property forms. Obviously, in the socialist countries these armed organisations such as the police and army protect the working class' ownership of society's productive forces from the threat of capitalist counterrevolution. In capitalist society therefore, institutions such as the police and army do not exist to protect 'people'. They were constituted and are organised today in order to protect the property and system of the ruling class. The tired old lie peddled by Labour Party hacks and even by many in our own Communist Party that the police's role should be one to 'protect the community' has been graphically exposed by the miners' strike to be a ludicrous and extremely dangerous idea. Do the police 'protect' the working class mining communities? Or do they 'protect' the black and Asian communities in, say, East London? Obviously not. The police are the sharp end of the capitalist onslaught on the democratic rights, living standards and jobs of the workers. They serve the bosses' state of which they are an integral part.

Under one hundred years ago such an assertion would have been quite uncontroversial. In his book, *Hooligan: a history of respectable fears*, Geoffrey Pearson shows how the police were vehemently hated and in some cases banished from working class areas in the period around the turn of the century. He quotes remarkably healthy

figures which show that around one in four of London's policemen were assaulted every year. Then, unlike now, there were few illusions about the 'neutrality' of the police and many working class neighbourhoods took active measures to ensure a united and cohesive front was presented to the police's alien presence. From Connolly's Irish Citizen's Army, to the Hunger Marches of the '30s, to today's miners' strike, workers have consistently been forced to take on the state's police. In contradiction to what Kinnock would like us to believe, working class violence directed against the representatives of the bourgeois state is most certainly part of the "traditions" of the working class movement and working class communities in general. So what should be our attitude today towards violence against the police?

Well, unlike Kinnock and his Labour traitors, communists obviously applaud working class resistance to the state's scum in blue. Yet complacency would be criminal. The readiness of the miners to reply in kind to the police's attacks has been a superb feature of this strike — but the healthy violence of the miners has remained for the most part unorganised, spontaneous and responsive. This unquestionably is a weakness, a weakness which has provoked heroic, but limited, actions from individual miners and more significantly, the organisation of small hit-squads which have been responsible for such actions as the gutting by fire of the buses of scab bus companies in night time guerilla actions.

The phenomenon of these tight-knit hit-squads appears to have sprung originally from the feelings of despair and frustration that have been produced in pickets by their inability to breach the highly trained police ranks. They seem to have been an organised and conscious development of the struggle onto a higher level. Because of this we do not dismiss the action of these groups as useless acts of 'terrorism' as some other political organisations have done. In many ways these squads have provided very valuable lessons for the mass of strikers in that:

*Firstly* — they advance and build on the already apparent willingness of militant miners not to be bound by the niceties of the ruling class' laws. The law exists to serve and protect the capitalists and therefore workers should have no qualms about breaking it, just as one day they will have no compulsion about breaking the back of the bourgeoisie as a class.

*Secondly* — these hit-squads evidently have a relatively high degree of organisation — precisely the missing ingredient we have pointed to in the miners' confrontations with the police.

Our major criticism of the actions of these squads is their smallness, their limited scope and effect, not the actions themselves. We have argued for the organisation of Workers' Defence Corps under the control of such organisations as the Miners' Support Committees which themselves must be transformed into broad fighting working class organisations. What we have pointed to as a burning necessity (no pun intended) is the organisation of these Workers' Defence Corps to protect picket lines from the police thuggery and above all to make them effective — to make sure that scabs do not have the luxury of a safe escort into work and that the police start to have some of the batterings that they have been dishing out to miners over the last six months or so paid back, with interest.



How can we stop this police terror?

We, unlike *Socialist Worker* for example, the paper that specialises in telling workers what they already know, do not counterpose the actions of the hit-squads to mass struggle as if the two were mutually exclusive. That is simply cretinous. The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) has elevated the tactic of mass picketing *à la* Saltley Gates almost to the level of a sacred principle of the class struggle. This organisation is terminally stuck in the model of industrial dispute of the early 70s — times may change but the SWP goes on forever peddling the same old politics of the 'big push'. In an article in *Socialist Worker* of August 18 attacking Kinnock's vile scabbing on the miners, they correctly point out that "violence is scarcely unusual in British industrial disputes..." They then go on significantly to list three examples from history where workers have been on the receiving end of the state's violence — in Featherstone colliery in South Yorkshire in 1893, 1910 in Tonypandy in South Wales and even in the 1926 General Strike, instead of pointing to the positive examples of workers organising their own defence as we do, they simply bewail the 'batoning' of strikers while failing to mention the fact that strikers in the 1926 General Strike did quite a lot of 'batoning' of their own.

This essentially defeatist outlook is carried over into their analysis of today's struggle. "We are in favour", they assure their readers, "of strikers fighting back...". Of course, the point to note here is that in order to "fight back" it is first necessary to wait to be attacked. *The Leninist* on the other hand is not in favour of setting workers up as punch bags — the surest way on earth to be attacked time and time again is to wait unorganised for the police offensive, then simply respond. The way to avoid violence is to prepare for it. In *The Leninist* No 8, we pointed to the experience of communists who led the workers' struggles in Methil, Fife during the 1926 strike:

"After police charges on mass pickets the Defence Corps, which 150 workers had joined at the outset, was reorganised. Its numbers rose to 700, of whom 400, commanded by workers who had been NCO's during the war, marched in military formation through the town to protect the picket. The police did not interfere again." (*Workers' Weekly*, June 11 1926).

We carry this attack on the *Socialist Worker's* view of workers' violence not because of any particular importance we attach to the organisation itself, but because their arguments are common amongst some striking miners and in the workers' movement in general. We believe that this essentially passive attitude to the violence of the working class — that is, supporting it where it

occurs as a spontaneous response to police attacks but being content to leave it unorganised — is deadly. For what underlies it is this same old idea that the police are 'neutral' — that we go along to picket lines expecting to be 'protected' by the police and when they fail to carry out this 'duty', only then do we respond. Many miners have learned that the police are *not* neutral, (it seems to have even seeped through to *Straight Left*).

Organisations like the SWP claim to know already that the police are not 'neutral'. Therefore it is simply criminal negligence not to fight for Workers' Defence Corps, to leave picket lines undefended and miners only capable of responding in a spontaneous and ill-disciplined way when the inevitable police assault comes. *Socialist Worker* simply assures miners that it is question of numbers. If we can only get enough people on the picket lines they tell us we can "intimidate" scabs and swamp the police. To prove their case they point (ad nauseum) to the example Saltley Gates and their only operative conclusion to take the struggle forward seems to be:

**"The miners have only one answer. To step up the picketing."** (*Socialist Worker*, August 18).

But in reality Saltley Gates proves our point not the SWP's. Again what was decisive then was precisely the question of organisation — in this case the lack of organisation of the police. It was not simply a question of the numbers involved. Since then the state has learned its lesson. The police's organisation has been centralised and sharpened up in preparation for just such a strategic battle as today's.

A disciplined, organised and purposive body of people can stand against and defeat a far larger mass if that mass is lacking in discipline, in technique and is without effective leadership. We would have thought that this is a fairly obvious point to make and the conclusions which spring from it for the miners' strike are also self-evident. Significantly however we have been one of the very few groups on the British left who have actually made it.

Our conclusions on violence and the miners therefore are somewhat different to the dismal defeatism of the SWP and many in our own party:

● ORGANISE WORKERS' DEFENCE CORPS UNDER THE CONTROL OF TRANSFORMED MINERS' SUPPORT COMMITTEES.

● THE MINERS' STRIKE IS A KEY BATTLE FOR ALL WORKERS. THEY MUST BE PREPARED TO WIN USING ANY MEANS NECESSARY.

● LEARN FROM SALTLEY GATES AND ORGREAVE. IT IS TIME TO ORGANISE OUR VIOLENCE.



## REVIEWS

### Opening Up the Debate

Peter Butler

Jim Arnison *Eurocommunism: the Historic Sell-out* Peter Grimshaw, Salford, nd (1984), 14pp, 25p.

A HEARTFELT welcome is due to this publication, as the latest in what could be the beginning of a much-needed torrent from the different currents in our Party so far unheard. Comrade Jim Arnison has long been the *Morning Star's* reporter in the north of England and has seen the Party go from the centrism of Harry Pollitt's day through the establishment of the class collaborationist *British Road to Socialism (BRS)* as the Party's programme, John Gollan's right opportunist General Secretaryship, down to the present Eurocommunist/right opportunist cabal that threatens to extinguish our Party completely.

The importance of comrade Arnison's publication is in its timing. With the Chater/Costelloites soon to be fighting off a vigorous challenge from the Euro/right opportunist EC of the Party, our prediction that such an upheaval would shake others out of their complacency begins to come true. All the various factions now existing within the opportunist section of the Party have their preferred version of the *BRS*, with or without modifications. Apart from the Straight Leftists whose arid fundamentalism is grounded in the first *BRS* (since it was approved by Stalin, no less), all other opportunists appear prepared to accept the most up to date version, agreed by Congress in 1977. There is nothing to suggest that comrade Arnison has not gone along with this, too.

It is the measure of the rightward drift, slide, then fall of the Party that comrades formerly so loyal to changing, and right-moving, Party

leaderships feel obliged to come out openly and criticise the present Party leadership in what for them is a drastic manner. Indeed the present situation in the Party is so serious that drastic steps do need to be taken to save it. Thus the revolt of the right opportunists Chater and Costello, and now comrade Arnison follows on after the Leninists' principled and disciplined rebellion.

In many respects comrade Arnison shares the disquiet of followers of Chater and Costello at the lessening of respect in which trade union bureaucrats have come to be held by the present leadership, and especially its Eurocommunist component. The worry is that the area of operations for the Party will be soon non-existent in the trade union bureaucracies. As comrade Arnison complains: "How can the Communist Party maintain its traditional key role and influence in the trade union movement when those who dominate the leadership do not believe in the leading role of the working class?" (p9.)

The ground for such a labour aristocrats' 'defence' of the Party is doubtless not of the firmest variety, since any acceptance of any version of the *BRS* is irreconcilable with Leninism. It is all very well and good to criticise the Euros for their "alliance of forces... which include sworn and active opponents of Socialism" and their theoretical retreat in the scramble to unite these forces against "Thatcherism" (p1). Unfortunately for those comrades with fond memories for the 1930s, when the rightward slip was not apparent to them, the current Euro predilection for such fare can be directly traced to the

Popular Front strategy of those times, with its assessment that an anti-fascist section of the bourgeoisie could be, and should be, united with, thus obliterating the independent role of the working class. It is this period of early class collaboration in the world communist movement that comrade Arnison refers to in glowing terms, and which we castigate remorselessly.

While we are on the pre-Second War period of our Party, however, there is a positive reference to the unemployed struggles of those times in the pamphlet. Correctly stating that "Then, the leaders of the unemployed struggles included Communists." (p9), he goes on to contrast this with the position today where "on the ground, there is little, if any direct leadership at all. In fact... it was the Communist Party which helped sell one of the biggest confidence tricks ever ... the now totally discredited Youth Opportunities Programme" (p9). In this concrete manner the best experiences of our Party are brought to the fore for emulation; this represents the plus side of the pamphlet's qualities. It is in this respect, and in a greater awareness of the need to look at all the Party's experiences (such as the mistaken Popular Front period) in a strong critical light that the Party can climb out of this deep trough of despair that opportunism has led it to.

In tackling the "European bottleneck in the advance to Socialism" (Introduction) that is Eurocommunism it is essential comrades who find themselves in the position of being forced to criticise the Euros in our Party do so from a position of strength. This is not the case with arguments that rest their case on the 'good old days' having been superlatively healthy, when it is still a question of sharing the Euros opportunist ideas about "Socialism being achieved by peaceful transition through the use of the Parliamentary process" (p5). But then of course that is inevitable as long as any version of the

*BRS* is accepted, let alone the most right opportunist one that came out in 1977. Pollitt may now be adopted by the Euros as their paterfamilias, but the class collaborationist approach was also adopted by Campbell, Dutt, and Gallacher. There can be no denying that our Party's centrism from the mid 1920s carried the seeds of the right opportunist cancer that looked set to weaken it unchallenged in the 1950s until along came the galloping clap of Eurocommunism to give it a helping hand to the Party's liquidation.

While there is every reason to see a strong current of persuasion flowing from the world communist movement in our Party's pre-war life, there is no succour in our task of re forging our Party to be found there in the overwhelming majority of communist parties. They will have their own battles against opportunism. No, the wealth of experience of our own and all other parties shows us that "It is not just within the British Communist Party... harmful ideas abound" (p13), although the author's view stops short and includes only the most overtly opportunist parties, such as in France, Italy, and Spain.

Those comrades who are taking their first tentative steps in the direction of open ideological discussion must expect to falter. It is after all so very unfamiliar to the ways of our Party that Leninist norms should be observed in any respect; so the basic tenet that discussion should be open and in front of the mass of the working class appears strange. There is now a deep groundswell that the Euro/right opportunist leadership will be hard put to defend itself against. Such is the degree of this leadership's treachery to communism that the silent erstwhile loyalists are prepared to remain silent no longer. With all its mistakes and positive and negative features publication of this pamphlet of comrade Arnison's is an example others will follow. The Euros and all the Party's opportunists will find the battle has only just begun.

### Fleabitten Myant

Kevin Sheahan

Chris Myant *Common Cause: Trade Unionists and Ireland* CPGB London, June 1984, pbk, pp8, 50p.

EVERY so often a dog finds the irritation of a flea so great that it is forced to scratch to ease the discomfort, knowing full well that the irritation will recur. All the opportunist tendencies in our Party find the war in Ireland an irritation which periodically needs to be scratched. At such times day schools, delegations, and pamphlets are used to ease the problem area.

Increasing involvement by Party members in the Irish issue and the questions they are raising is forcing our opportunist leadership more into the open. London District of the Party (home as it is to the Chater/Costello *Morning Star* faction) has recently issued a pamphlet on Ireland; comrade Myant's offering attempts to construct an ideological justification for the chauvinism of Eurocommunism.

Comrade Myant appears as the self-appointed spokesman of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), lavishly praising that body. We find no mention of its real role: that of token anti-sectarianism. This Committee may have contributed to the formation of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA), but when the Unionist statelet drove this off the streets it lost all its active trade union support. Internment, the hunger

strike, and the killing of trade union members by the security forces have been ignored or met by meek criticism from the trade unions. Tragically, the fact is that the majority within the Six Counties' trade union movement, unlike Myant's portrayal, has not played a progressive role but its opposite.

Myant barely disguises his yearning for a progressive colonial policy. He tells us (p6) that Britain has allowed social conditions to fall behind those in the rest of the United Kingdom. Therefore everything would be all right if only a British government (preferably Labour) would implement the alternative economic strategy of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU. Apparently imperialism must be made to clear up its own mess, like a naughty child. Of course the ruling class rejects such advice; instead it spends more on arms, police, and prisons in an attempt to terrorise and to drive the republican population into submission. The ruling class fully understands what is at stake: not equality but the national freedom of Ireland.

Comrade Myant's misrepresentation of the national question recurs frequently. "Partition could be imposed in the first place only because those who wanted it were able to establish a balance of political forces in their favour." (p4). The implication is that the bourgeoisie rules only by consent, and that Protestant workers were able to act as an independent class which

persuaded Britain to establish partition. In fact imperialism rules in the Six Counties only because the Irish masses were unable to force Britain to surrender, because imperialism was able to impose its rule through force. Partition was imposed not at the behest of a section of the working class, but to benefit the imperialist bourgeoisie. Partition was the direct result of the power of imperialism, not the machinations of a group of Orange backwoodsmen and their plebian followers.

Claiming that "we see the division (ie partition — KS) as being between its people, not simply as a line on a map" (p6), comrade Myant tries to ignore the fact that people possess differing political ideologies due to material conditions and interests. The drawing "of a line on a map" represents an objective factor which reflects the strength of imperialism: it did not spring simply from people's minds but from imperialist necessity. Irish people do not wake up in the morning to be either republican or loyalist; this is determined by their relationship to imperialism and its strength. Thus the border was not the result of simple internal "division" amongst Irish people but was the direct product of the Black and Tan War and then civil war which decided in imperialism's favour.

The struggle in Ireland must, for the Eurocommunists, be confined to 'bread and butter' issues: "After all, the national question rears its head in many ways... higher unemployment, worse housing, higher prices, and poorer services than anywhere in Britain" (p2).

Because like all extreme apologists for the labour bureaucracy Myant's criticism in the end is not so much concerned with combating imperialism but the just violence of the

oppressed. Would we have imagined fifteen years ago that "a total of well over 2,000 deaths, many hundreds of them soldiers"? (p4). There is little sympathy with the hundreds of republicans killed by imperialist violence, the dead hunger strikers, or Bobby Sands MP; let alone solidarity.

Opportunist hatred for the republican movement is even more pronounced in *Ireland*, the publication put out by the Party's Irish Advisory Secretary, comrade Bert Ward. "Have the IRA and its political supporters any more to show for their effort? Hardly... It is a liberation campaign which helps no-one but the enemies of liberation". The Provisionals' mass base, the election of Sinn Féin councillors and of MPs, Sinn Féin becoming the fourth party in the Twenty-Six Counties, a member on the Executive Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions: all this is nothing? Hardly. Compare it with our Party's fortunes during the same past fifteen years.

Yet even greater sins are to be laid at the door of the republican movement: "their bombing campaigns in Britain have, as in Northern Ireland itself, generated support for repression... These laws... have helped intimidate people and scare others away from involvement in the politics of Ireland". On the contrary, the failure of a mass solidarity movement in Britain is not through the Provos' bombs but is due to the grip of reformism on the working class. It was not the republican movement which struck the first blow but imperialism. Imperialism as a system produces war and violence; as communists we must stand with those who suffer from its oppression and with those who struggle and fight against it.



## Labour and the Miners' Strike

# Where Does Their Loyalty Lie?

Ralph Hall

ALTHOUGH most rank and file Labour Party militants have enthusiastically thrown themselves into miners solidarity work, the Labour leadership has spent most of the time in an embarrassed silence, wondering what this messy and inconvenient strike will do to their precious poll ratings, and when these 'leaders' of the working class have broken their calculated silence, their 'support' has been shown to be hollow indeed. Apart from the hypocritical rhetoric Kinnock and Co have heaped on the Iron Lady and her henchmen, their remarks have been more in the way of admonishments of the miners for their refusal to support a Fleet Street ballot, their use of violence and intimidation in defence against the thugs-in-blue and the scabs. Since we dealt with this question in *The Leninist* No.11 (see Do Kinnock & Co back the miners?) more of Kinnock's Shadow Cabinet colleagues have joined in the denunciations. For example, the other half of the so-called 'dream ticket' (more like a nightmare for the working class) Deputy Leader Roy Hattersley has lectured miners on picket line violence and Shore has likewise berated their militant tactics. Kinnock himself quickly made it known he was against the idea of a 'big bang' — a wave of 'major disruption' in other words solidarity strike action; he explicitly stated his opposition to even a 24-hour general strike when before the TUC Congress, he declared "That is not the way British trade unionism works". Unfortunately not it seems. But it was at the TUC Congress itself that he delivered his clearest condemnation of working class violence. Notwithstanding such patent nonsense such as his assertion that the picket line violence had provided the government "with the opportunity they have long sought to introduce-politically change in the methods of British policing." (*The Guardian*, September 5 1984) — such "British policing" having been developed in the Six Counties years before and refined in the wake of the Summer riots of 1981 — Kinnock had the temerity to declare: "Violence, I do not have to tell this Congress... disgusts union opinion and divides union attitudes. It creates a climate of brutality. It is alien to the temperament and the intelligence of the British trade union movement." (*Ibid*) This sickeningly hypocritical attitude, shared no doubt by most of his fellow Labour parliamentarians, should expose clearly where the loyalties of the Labour leaders really lie. Violence only disgusts "union opinion" (or rather Neil Kinnock and his cronies in Parliament) when it is violence against scabs and coppers, perhaps he is also disgusted with the violence committed by the black masses of Soweto and Sharpeville, for as we all know he is totally against the military campaign of the IRA. In contrast this damnable hypocrite supports the presence of British imperialism and its bloody war in Ireland it was his Party that supported the Falklands adventure that resulted in the deaths of 200 British and 800 Argentinian soldiers.

We, on the other hand fully support the violence of pickets against police — the defenders of the ruling class — and defend the right of workers and oppressed nations to use such methods against the class enemy.

### Is the Labour Party a workers' party?

Very few would deny the Labour Party's salient and central position in present day politics in Britain nor its mass working class membership and



Neil Kinnock: Which side is he on?

its importance to the workers movement. For many years, in fact ever since its inception it has acted as a magnet to individuals, often from the petty-bourgeoisie or middle strata in general, who seek a lucrative career in parliamentary politics. Moreover, at various times in its history, particularly in the past ten years, it has also been a pole of attraction to many disenchanted with the sect politics of the petty-bourgeois revolutionary left such as that of the WRP and SWP, and some from the Communist Party and NCP driven out by bureaucratic centralism or having accepted the tailist logic of the opportunists dominating these two organisations. But at its core the question is whether the Labour Party is a genuine workers party and if not, is it simply a capitalist party like the SDP or the Tories or can it only be scientifically defined in some other way. Though *The Leninist* has dealt with this question in previous editions, particularly in the six theoretical journals, today with the miners strike and the general sharpening of the class struggle, it is especially important for us to repeat and elaborate our analysis of the Labour Party.

Regarding the composition of Labour's membership, it is clear that the constituency members are in the main working class (though a sizeable proportion are from the middle strata). But it is the political-levy paying workers in the trade unions affiliated to it which make it distinctly different from the obviously bourgeois Conservative, Social-Democratic and Liberal parties whose membership, we may add, is predominantly drawn from the petty-bourgeoisie and middle strata.

It is that organised working class, i.e. trade union base that means that the Labour Party is not simply a bourgeois party like the other major British political parties. Is it then a genuine workers party?

There are many tendencies on the left who undoubtedly regard Labour in such a light, notably the 'Marxists' (in truth left social-democrats) of *Militant* and all the main opportunist factions within the Communist Party. For example the most recent version of the *British Road to Socialism* terms it the "mass party of the working class" (p.24), the Chater/Costello faction around the *Morning Star* call it "the federal party of the labour movement" (editorial July 24 1984) and the Straight Leftist centrist faction describe Labour as "the mass parliamentary expression of the working class movement" ('Charlie Woods' pamphlet, p26). All three of these views are essentially the same, that the Labour party is indeed a workers party, a political organisation representing the interests of the working class. We consider such a position to constitute a vulgar distortion of the truth as its role in the miners' struggle shows and unlike the

opportunists we are fully in agreement with Lenin on this question. We make no apology for yet again quoting from Lenin's speech to the Second Congress of the Comintern in which he dealt in a typically incisive way with the problems of communist organisation and tactics in Britain. On the nature of the Labour Party he said the following:

"Indeed, the concepts 'political department of the trade unions' or 'political expression' of the trade union movement, are erroneous. Of course, most of the Labour Party's members are workingmen. However, whether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat. Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is lead by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers..." (CW, Vol 31, p258)

The Labour Party has not changed in any fundamental respect since 1920, it still retains the basic features pinpointed by Lenin, it is still in essence a *bourgeois workers party* a mass party composed of working class men and women — yes, but also one lead by politicians totally committed to capitalism and dependent upon the trade union bureaucracies whose leaders cast their millions of affiliated votes for this or that brand of reformism and in effect control tightly the Party's purse. It was in fact the trade union bureaucrats (the TUC) who formed the direct ancestor of the Labour Party — the Labour Representation Committee in 1900 to defend their social base, the labour aristocracy whose privileges were being eroded by Britain's worsening economic position. In subsequent years, Labour consistently and loyally pursued the interests of this stratum of society and its senior partner — the capitalist class.

### Labour's record

Ever since the opening of the first imperialist world war we have seen Labour leaders participate in bourgeois governments and when in office alone they have invariably carried out anti-working class measures including sending the army in to scab on strikers as they did with the dockers in 1948 and with the dustmen in 1979, and attempting to push through anti-union legislation — the Wilson government's 'In Place of Strife'. Labour also (as well as Tory administrations) cut public expenditure on health and education in the 1970s, furthermore, all post-war



governments have been party to the closure of *hundreds* of coalmines and the loss of thousands of jobs in coal and other industries. Though Labour governments have introduced some minor reforms they in no way challenged the capitalist system — such as the NHS, increased welfare benefits and some social and industrial legislation in 1945. Above all Labour governments have *always* unswervingly carried out the policies in the key economic and political fields that were demanded by Britain's imperialist ruling class. They have done this equally in the realm of foreign policy as with domestic policy.

All Labour governments have pursued policies of hostility to the Soviet Union and the national liberation movements; they have thus, in line with Conference policy, maintained their commitment to the imperialist military alliance of NATO continuously since its formation in 1949. Labour governments have willingly aided the brutal counter-revolutionary war of US imperialism in Korea and supported its bloody war in Vietnam; not to mention their pursuance of savage colonial war in Malaya, Aden and standing out as the blackest stain on Labour's palest pink banner is its record in aiding, abetting and even initiating the repression of the national liberation movement across the water, in Ireland.

It was a Labour government that in 1969 sent troops into the Six Counties to bolster British imperialism's position, it was a Labour government that introduced the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 in order to systematically suppress Republicans, anti-imperialists and their supporters in the Irish community in Britain. It was a Labour government that presided over the torture of detainees and the terrorising of the nationalist community of the statelet by the British Army, RUC and secret police from 1974-79. Official Labour policy and practice on Ireland has been perhaps the most damning indictment of its slavish servility to the dictates of Britain's imperialist ruling class.

The great weight of evidence, both historical and that staring up at us from reports in yesterdays newspapers, show beyond any reasonable doubt that the Labour Party is a bourgeois workers party, whose leaders have always put the interests of 'Britain' and 'the nation' — in other words capitalism, before those of the working class.

We sincerely ask those who still pin their hopes on yet another 'next Labour government', especially striking miners whose political levy goes into Labour Party coffers to finance the ascent of the Kinnocks, Hatterslys, Shores, Healeys, and yes, the Benns, into the exalted position of administering the capitalist system, whether they should support such a party so completely wedded to Parliament, the police and the ruling class state.